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The Tenth International Conference on Languages, Linguistics, Translation and Literature

Seyed Hossein Fazeli, Ph.D.

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Educators' Cultural Competence in Higher Education: A Qualitative Single Case Study

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Abstract

This study addresses the issue of limited cultural competence among higher education educators and its impact on the English as a second language (ESL) learning process for English language learners (ELLs). The purpose was to explore educators' perspectives regarding their cultural competence to identify ways to enhance the ESL learning experience. Using Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory as a lens, the study examines how educators, as members of society, influence the ESL learning process. A qualitative single case study was conducted involving 12 educators, six of whom were part-time, from 10 academic departments at a community college in Southern California. Data were collected through 12 semi-structured individual interviews and one focus group with four participants. A thematic analysis revealed seven key themes: (a) limited cultural competence; (b) uneasiness toward ELLs from diverse backgrounds; (c) preparedness to teach ELLs; (d) slow progress in cultural competence in higher education; (e) limited institutional support; (f) instructional strategies to support ELLs; and (g) creating a safe learning space for ELLs. The findings suggest the need for institutions to provide support and cultural competence training, as well as to consider educators' recommendations for fostering supportive learning environments for all students.

***Keywords*:** Educators' Cultural Competence, Higher Education, English Language Learning, Cultural Differences

1. Introduction

The composition of the student body, especially in higher education, has become increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse over time (Han et al., 2020; Prieto, 2020; Sailsman, 2021). This diverse student body includes an increasing percentage of women, people of color, immigrants, and foreign-born students (international students) enrolling in higher education (American Institutions for Research, 2018; Prieto, 2020). Considering the growing diversity and changing classrooms in the United States, students' cultural backgrounds play a role in English as a second language (ESL) learning (Alzouebi et al., 2020; Sailsman, 2021; Yasmin et al., 2020). Students from different cultures, for instance, use different learning strategies in the classroom (Shi, 2018). Additionally, cultural backgrounds may restrict learner participation as actions and learning strategies are influenced by what the student believes and, therefore, may slow language development among English language learners (ELLs; Alzouebi et al., 2020; Shi, 2018; Yasmin et al., 2020). Therefore, as the number of ELLs rises, so does the need for educators to be aware of these cultural barriers and to know how to support students' ESL learning. This qualitative single case study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the higher education educators' perspectives regarding their cultural competence?
2. How do higher education educators perceive they support the ESL learning process of ELLs through their cultural competence?

The purpose of this study was to explore higher education educators' perspectives on cultural competence to understand how to improve the ESL learning process of ELLs. Vygotsky's (1929) sociocultural theory was used as the theoretical framework for this study to understand educators' perspectives concerning how they apply their cultural competence in classroom practice. Vygotsky developed the sociocultural theory to describe the relationship between children's development and society. Moreover, the sociocultural theory examines the extent and depth to which society and culture influence language acquisition. To enhance their higher-order thinking processes, culture or society equips individuals with tools through collaborative and meaningful activities. According to Vygotsky, human cognitive and cultural development are socially and culturally mediated by a series of factors, such as language, materials, signs, and symbols.

Participants' demographic and perceptual information were collected. Demographic information is participant information that describes who they are, their background, education, age, gender, and occupation (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). In contrast, perceptual information includes participants' experiences, perceptions, and long-held assumptions about the study's topic (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Through this research, participants shared definitions of culture, perspectives regarding their cultural competence, cultural obstacles encountered with ELLs of various backgrounds, and how educators perceived they support the ESL learning process of ELLs through their cultural competence. An in-depth exploration also shed light on participants' cultural teaching experiences, a more complete understanding of the studied problem, and suggestions for academic departments regarding cultural and diversity training.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Role of Culture

Culture is typically defined as certain types of food, religion, and social habits of a group or community (Mat Razi & Rahmat, 2020). However, the definition of culture extends beyond race and ethnicity and is also defined in terms of (a) preferred behaviors (being passive or active), (b) interpersonal values (cooperation versus competition), (c) preferences for learning (through teaching, experience, or both; Alshehri et al., 2022; Keumala et al., 2019; Shen & Chen, 2020), (d) how time is seen (linear, cyclical, or in terms of events; Paris, 2023), and (e) how reality is seen along with age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and socioeconomic status (SES; University of Kansas, 2024).

Students' culture may influence classroom learning. As classrooms are becoming more diverse due to students coming from different parts of the world, students may bring with them not only ideas and perspectives of the world but also their unique cultures and

diversities (Alzouebi et al., 2020; Macgregor & Folinazzo, 2018; Mat Razi & Rahmat, 2020). Studies support ELLs' written voice, or writing style, may be significantly influenced by their cultural backgrounds (Alshehri et al., 2022; Lee, 2021; McGann et al., 2020). Therefore, cultural differences, such as verbal and non-verbal communication variations and different meanings of words and terms across cultures, may become cultural barriers (Han et al., 2020; Lan, 2020). Cultural barriers often lead to classroom issues and impact teacher-student relationships (Badrkhani, 2020; Macgregor & Folinazzo, 2018; Mikkonen et al., 2019). However, the problem with cultural differences is that educators and practitioners often overlook students' native cultures in curriculum planning and classroom practice (Alzouebi et al., 2020; Shi, 2018; Yasmin et al., 2020). At the same time, the greater the cultural difference, the greater the barrier to communication (Yasin et al., 2018). Therefore, educators must recognize the potential cultural barriers between educators and students to ease communication and maximize learning (Hasanah & Abdulrahman, 2021; Shen & Chen, 2020; Yasin et al., 2018).

2.2. Collectivism and Individualism Cultures in Western Classrooms

Several scholars have identified differences between collectivist and individualist cultures that need to be considered, as they may affect classroom learning (Alshehri et al., 2022; Keumala et al., 2019; Shen & Chen, 2020; Yasin et al., 2018; Yasmin et al., 2020; Yeh et al., 2021). For instance, Asian students behave more passively and conservatively, a characteristic of collectivism in Eastern countries (Keumala et al., 2019; Shen & Chen, 2020; Yeh et al., 2021). Standing out is also unimportant for individuals from collectivist cultures (Lee, 2021). However, cultural shyness from Asian countries becomes a cultural barrier restricting learner autonomy (LA) and participation in English language classrooms (Yasmin et al., 2020). Although the reasons for non-participating Asians are not universal, it is essential to note that sometimes, reasons are due to contextual, personal, or situational factors (Yeh et al., 2021).

Collectivism prefers the use of collective pronouns "we" instead of individual pronouns "I", and "group rights" instead of "individual rights" to reflect their collective belonging and commitment to the community (Alshehri et al., 2022; Lee, 2021). In contrast to collectivism, individualism, a feature often seen in the Western world, is composed of more competitive behavior with individual performance (Alshehri et al., 2022; Keumala et al., 2019; Shen & Chen, 2020). Unlike students from collective cultures, North American students maintain their individualism by speaking up, passionately participating, and sharing opinions (presenting more competitive behavior) in the classroom (Alshehri et al., 2022; Keumala et al., 2019; Shen & Chen, 2020). While asking questions and interrupting class is encouraged in the Western world, these cultural behaviors can be concerning to students from Eastern cultures, which may affect learning and participation (Alshehri et al., 2022; Keumala et al., 2019; Lan, 2020; Macgregor & Folinazzo, 2018; Yeh et al., 2021).

Other cultural differences between the Eastern and Western worlds that may affect classroom learning (Almotiary, 2022; Alshehri et al., 2022; Lan, 2020; Keumala et al., 2019; Shen & Chen, 2020; Yasmin et al., 2020; Yeh et al., 2021). In the Middle East, shyness is a

valued and appreciated quality when interacting with the opposite sex (Yasmin et al., 2020). Because male-female interactions are not culturally appreciated, Middle Eastern girls are raised in a way in which they are not allowed to interact with family members (cousins) or argue with their brothers and fathers in a louder voice (Yasmin et al., 2020). Due to their Islamic religious practices, men pray at mosques, while women pray at home in the Middle East (Almotiary, 2022; Yasin et al., 2018).

Findings of cultural shyness also suggest potential differences in ELLs' behaviors and dynamics in mixed-gender learning environments when interacting with the opposite sex. In Saudi Arabia, all classes and even all sectors of life are segregated (Almotiary, 2022). Due to their society's segregation of males and females, communication between Saudi males and Saudi females is prohibited (Almotiary, 2022). If placed together in mixed-gender classrooms, Saudi women may react differently to a Saudi male than to a male from any other country (Almotiary, 2022). Therefore, it is likely that performance and learning outcomes will differ between same-gender and mixed-gender activities in Western learning contexts. However, this cultural barrier changes when Saudi students become more open-minded and accept each other after immersing in the American culture (Almotiary, 2022). Therefore, the literature supports that educators must consider further differences between collectivism and individualism in Western classrooms.

3. Methodology

3.1 Overview

A qualitative single case study was used to explore higher education educators' perspectives on cultural competence to understand how to improve the ESL learning process of ELLs. In qualitative research, triangulation efforts are essential to address issues of accuracy and trustworthiness (Billups, 2021; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Data triangulation involves using multiple sources at varying times, places, and with different individuals to capture various perspectives and experiences (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Thus, I ensured data triangulation for this qualitative single case study by combining different collection methods (individual interviews and one focus group) and selecting participants from diverse academic statuses (tenured, tenure-track, and adjunct educators) and various academic disciplines as multiple sources.

Data for this study were collected during two phases: 12 semi-structured individual interviews and one focus group with four of the 12 participants, which were conducted on Zoom. Individual interviews and the focus group session were approximately one hour and took place during the summer and fall of 2023.

3.2. Instruments

In the semi-structured individual interviews, I collected participants' demographic (race and ethnicity) and interview data using questions adapted from the cultural competence inventory-preservice educators (CCI-PT) developed by Yang et al. (2020). In addition to their initial understanding of culture and perspectives regarding their cultural competence, the semi-structured individual interviews were also used to explore the educators' teaching

experiences, cultural obstacles encountered with ELLs of various backgrounds, and how educators perceive they support the ESL learning process of ELLs through their cultural competence.

I developed the focus group questions. The focus group collected data including shared opinions about their cultural competence, what educators considered their academic department was doing well, and what their department should do regarding cultural competence and diversity training.

3.3. Sample

The sample for this qualitative research consisted of a multi-disciplinary sample of higher education educators from 10 academic departments at one urban community college in California. Additionally, the community college selected for this study is among the two-year colleges with the highest number of ELLs in the United States (Ross & Moody, 2020). Through a criterion sampling method, I recruited 12 participants. I selected this study sample when specific criteria were followed or met by the participants.

The criteria for this study required participants to (a) be tenured, tenure-track, or adjunct educators currently teaching at least one class at the community college, (b) hold a master's or doctoral degree, (c) have 3 or more years of experience in the educational field, (d) have worked with ELLs in their role as a higher education educator.

Following informed consent, I assigned participants a pseudonym using a random name generator to ensure confidentiality. Data collection began after the identification and selection of participants. Participants' demographics, including their ethnicity and racial background, academic status, and discipline at the community college, are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

Participants Demographics

Participant	Pseudonym	Ethnicity/Racial Background	Program/Discipline	Academic Status
1	Ana	North African	Modern Languages	Adjunct Instructor
2	George	Asian	World History	Adjunct Instructor
3	Tara	White	Communications	Tenured Instructor
4	Debbie	White	Art	Associate Instructor
5	Brad	White	Business	Associate Instructor
6	Jennifer	White	Early Childhood Ed.	Tenure-track Instructor
7	Lisa	White	Communications	Tenured Professor
8	Eve	Mexican American	Earth Science	Adjunct Instructor
9	Susanne	White	English	Tenured Professor
10	Steven	White	Kinesiology	Adjunct Instructor
11	Jason	Asian	Business	Adjunct Instructor
12	Victoria	Mexican American	Life Science	Tenured Professor

3.3 Findings / Data Analysis

The data analytic approach I adopted for this qualitative single case study was thematic analysis. All raw data—verbatim transcripts obtained from individual semi-structured interviews and one focus group—was transferred to NVivo.

The starting point of thematic analysis is finding common words and patterns in audio files and verbatim interview transcripts from the extensive data (Gibbs, 2018). With the assistance of NVivo, I progressed from an in-depth and thorough examination of the extensive data to the creation and reduction of codes from meaningful transcript data and, finally, to the development of themes (Gibbs, 2018). After developing themes, looking for relationships and differences between themes is the next stage during the data analysis process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). In the final data analysis stage, I linked the themes to the theoretical framework or literature (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Findings from the focus group supported and contrasted each other with similar or different themes. To obtain a close review of data, I also looked for any outliers, unusual cases, or any missing data that need to be highlighted and may warrant further research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Based on the coding, I identified seven major themes from the educators' perspectives: five for Research Question 1 and two for Research Question 2.

Research Question 1: What are the higher education educators' perspectives regarding their cultural competence?

Interview data revealed information on whether cultural competence is evident in the classrooms, provided recommendations to support educators, and aimed to improve second language acquisition. After a thorough analysis of 12 individual interviews and one focus group, I identified five themes: (a) educators' limited cultural competence; (b) uneasiness toward ELLs from diverse cultural backgrounds; (c) educators' preparedness to teach ELLs; (d) slow progress of cultural competence in higher education, (e) and limited or lack of institutional support.

Theme 1: Educators' limited cultural competence

I identified Theme 1 from educators' perspectives regarding their cultural competence reflected in their responses. Seven of 12 participants (58%) admitted to having limited cultural competence, which could impact the ESL learning process of ELLs. Jennifer, a full-time early childhood education (ECC) educator, indicated:

> My cultural knowledge, I don't believe I have a huge amount of cultural knowledge on board. Something that I have been completely revising and learning all of the time … How that impacts instruction is probably the number one impact on instruction.

Interestingly, only 25% (3 of 12) —those with a doctoral degree or pursuing a doctoral degree at the time of the individual interviews—indicated while they enjoy learning about cultures, it is impossible to know every culture. In this regard, Lisa stated:

> You're not going to know all the different cultures. That's not possible, and what's specific to them? But when we start having judgments to go: "Oh, there might be something cultural going on here that I'm not aware of, and just watching for it."

Although most educators admitted to having limited cultural competence and all enjoyed learning about ELL's cultures, some recognized the struggle to know every culture. When educators possess cultural knowledge, they identify cultural differences but also explain and predict the students' behaviors of other cultures in the teaching and learning process (Hasanah & Abdulrahman, 2021; Shen & Chen, 2020; Yasin et al., 2018).

Theme 2: Educators' uneasiness toward ELLs from diverse cultural backgrounds

I identified Theme 2 because despite being overwhelmingly positive toward ELLs as educators enjoyed learning about ELLs' cultures; they noted cultural differences and micro-aggressions between ELLs and educators across interviews. All 12 educators noted the following cultural differences when working with ELLs from diverse cultural backgrounds in the classroom. George, an adjunct world history educator and an ELL himself, shared, "The culture. I'd say culture...You know…some Asians from far east China, Japan, Korea, they tend to be more conservative…shy…That could hinder learning a language."

Anna—an adjunct modern language educator and an ELL practicing the Islamic faith—also noted cultural differences among ELLs of Arab backgrounds while doing group work in Western classrooms by recalling, "Some Arab [Muslim] girls like they don't like working in groups with boys. So then if I put in groups of girls and boys mixed, they shut down." However, no indication was reported that the educator, being a Muslim herself, used a strategy or accommodation to separate Arab females and male (Muslim) students for group work. Culturally responsive educators help reduce cultural barriers, minimize classroom misunderstandings and communication gaps, and improve learning outcomes (Han et al., 2020).

A few educators (3 of 12 [25%]), while acknowledging cultural differences, also admitted faculty's micro-aggressions toward ELLs:

> I've had so many students tell me horror stories about teachers or professors and how they've been treated by them because they were learning English. And they made them embarrassed or made them feel stupid. And it just weighed on them for the rest of their life. And that's such a huge responsibility, so absolutely huge. (Jennifer)
>
> I had a Korean student before I understood Korean culture very much. He was an international student. This was several years back, but I think about it often. This one hurts a lot. It was at least maybe 10 or 15 years ago…. and I didn't know a

> lot about Korean culture. Yet, I still don't know…less than I should because you can't know everything. And he came into the class late. He'd been late a few times. And this particular day, I said: "You're late. Take a seat, but you're late. See me after class." And that student never came back. I lost the student. (Lisa)

Theme 3: Educators' preparedness to teach ELLs

I identified Theme 3 mainly from participants' beliefs regarding their cultural competence in teaching ELLs throughout this study's interviews, in which most participants mentioned feeling prepared (8 of 12 [66%]), somewhat prepared (3 of 12 [25%]), and not prepared at all (1 of 12 [8%]) to teach ELLs. Steven, an adjunct kinesiology educator, described feeling prepared when encouraging Asian ELLs to participate in athletic activities:

> Working with ELLs is relatively easy because of the tools we have, and particularly for doing athletics, we can demonstrate a lot…In the activity class, which is mostly movement-based, I'm pretty prepared in that sense. In the lecture class, I think I'm a lot less prepared than I would like to think I am, so…And again, that's where you really have to be careful because they'll look you right in the eye and try to be polite and try to make good eye contact and it seems like they're understanding it, but they're not so…. They tend to not participate very much. If you want to participate, you've got to sort of force that.

A few participants (3 of 12 [25%]) mentioned feeling somewhat prepared to teach ELLs. Even though George emphasized teaching history and not ESL, George described feeling somewhat prepared to teach ELLs when using PowerPoint slides in class:

> Yes, I mean. Most of the time I am competent. And also, when I am doing a lecture, I provide a PowerPoint because of my accent. The PowerPoint makes it easier for people like me …with an accent. And students may have some problems with language.

Only one of the 12 participants, Brad, admitted to not feeling prepared when working with ELLs. While acknowledging cultural differences, Brad mentioned doing his best when working with ELLs:

> I am not prepared at all… I feel like I'm reactive. I don't sort of come at it from a basis of experience and a sort of unified theory of what's the right way to proceed. Yeah, well, what you should do is…fill in the blank…and very much I do the best I can as opposed to...

As educators' perspectives resembled their preparedness to teach ELLs, they also revealed a slow progress of cultural competence in some academic disciplines of higher education.

Theme 4: A Slow progress of cultural competence in higher education

I identified this theme from participants addressing concerns with a slow progress of cultural competence in their academic departments while acknowledging the effects of lack or limited cultural competence in higher education**.** An overwhelming majority (11 of 12 [91%]) of participants revealed a slow progress of cultural competence in higher education, particularly across the art, ECE, and communication studies departments. Lisa addressed the slow progress of cultural competence when she shared some colleagues opposing changing instruction to accommodate ELLs from diverse backgrounds in her Department of Communication Studies:

> You have other instructors who… just, "This is my standard. I'm not changing my standard. I'm not gonna change my…" …. It's like "Well, dude, your students are coming from everywhere, and you really need to bother to consider that maybe you're not doing it in a way that's helping your students anymore …. When you had all White males from the U.S., sure, sure."

Participants across the art and ECE departments, on the other hand, spoke positively about progress in their academic department in regards to cultural competence in the focus group:

> There's been a real change in kind of the philosophy behind teaching art, and it's seen in… Both my schools are very different. And this college… It's no longer about learning art skills. It's about that art…. It's an opportunity to provide diversity and to honor it. And to reach equity. And we've been asked actually to change our curriculum to accomplish this. (Debbie)
>
> I can say that early childhood education is the exact opposite (laughs). Every department is very quiet different at this college, and we are very laser-focused on diversity. We define it. We have looked at it so often. We've reflected on our own diversity within ourselves, and it's quite a bit. (Jennifer)

Appropriately trained, culturally competent educators can shape the students' experience by increasing student participation while respecting and admiring ELLs' culture to enhance learning outcomes (Badrkhani, 2020).

Theme 5: Limited or lack of institutional support

I identified Theme 5 from educators expressing limited or lack of institutional support while also verbalizing a call for cultural competence training in higher education**.** Six of 12 educators (50%) reported a limited or lack of institutional support. When asked what particular cultural group she would like to know more about, Susanne expressed a lack of institutional support and emphasized the use of colleague network:

> My classes are overwhelmingly [Latino], and I feel like there's something, especially in this co-requisite class, that we could be tapping into that work. And I've been puzzling on it... I've been talking to, friends and colleagues about it. I haven't hit on anything yet…I am trying to figure out how we can leverage the strengths that our students bring that are connected to their identifies to help support them more in our specific class. Don't know what that looks like, but I I'd like to figure that out or at least work on that.

Additionally, when asked about the major source of information that has shaped their cultural competence to work with ELLs of diverse cultures in the focus group session, other participants reflected on the support received by the institution. Among the comments cited were those of Debbie, who said: "Yeah [experience], because having the students in the class learning, watching them, seeing how it changes. I haven't gotten too much support from the college," and those by Jennifer, who commented: "I think probably the same. Experience. And any support that I get would be from my peers or from my colleagues who are also English, second language learners."

Most educators (9 of 12 [75%]) expressed a call for cultural competence training in higher education. Steven shared his call for cultural competence training and a better institutional response to work with minority students and ELLs:

> Now it's been left to teachers to figure out this. And I just think that's a bad strategy. The issues that happen for minority students or English learners are generally institutional, and so they have to be dealt with at the institutional level... and then you're relying on, you're relying on me… To have enough self-awareness in that moment to notice what's going on, right? And like that's a hit or miss. It would be better if there was an institutional response to these things.

Victoria also expressed her concerns about cultural competence training in higher education. Since she completed her dissertation in the 1990s, Victoria highlighted the need for cultural competence training, not only in education but also in other fields, by commenting, "It's been needed in medicine in any… whether it's diabetics, physical therapy, nursing, whatever. It's been needed for a really long time. I mean since before I did my dissertation, and it's still very much needed."

Research Question 2: How do higher education educators perceive they support the ESL learning process of ELLs through their cultural competence?

Exploring higher education educators' perspectives on how they perceived they supported the ESL learning process of ELLs through their cultural competence revealed their teaching experiences with ELLs from diverse cultural backgrounds. For Research Question 2, I identified two themes from the interview data: educators' instructional strategies to support ELLs and educators creating a safe learning space for ELLs.

Theme 6: Educators' instructional strategies to support ELLs

I identified this theme from educators sharing strategies they believed supported the ESL learning process of ELLs through their cultural competence. The strategies educators used the most were the inclusion of culture (all 12 [100%], giving extra time to ELLs (10 of 12 [83%], and minor instructional adjustments (5 of 12 [41%]). All participants (100%) embraced the inclusion of culture for ELLs in their instructional practice. When asked how his cultural knowledge impacted his instruction, Jason shared:

> If I'm familiar with their culture, of course, I try to… It's very difficult to learn everybody's culture, of course. But if you're sort of familiar with the culture that your class has and what the students have, in terms of their culture, then it helps you create relevant examples in the class.

When showing PowerPoint presentations in her nutrition class, Victoria shared culture empowers students to get involved with the curriculum and participate:

> I think it's affirming for the people in there. That you're bringing up their foods and their ingredients. You're letting them share their foods and their ingredients. You make an effort to get to know how their names are pronounced.

When asked what components of cultures she considered when planning instruction in the Department of ECE, Jennifer explained:

> When planning instruction and components of culture, I think about our learning styles because learning styles are very much connected to culture. But a lot of people don't think they are. For example, you might have a child in your classroom who is from a culture where making eye contact with the teacher is not something that is …that you do. You don't make eye contact with someone you respect. You look down. Someone who is from my culture might think, oh, that's a disrespectful person.

A majority (11 of 12 [91%]) of participants expressed giving extra time to ELLs based on educators' cultural responsiveness to ELLs' social and communication skills limitations. When she shared questions in her science class, Eve gave ELLs extra time to think about their answer: "And then I let them have time to write it down. Sometimes, they need time to think about it; they write it down, and then they have it in front of them so they can read it." Lisa, in her individual interview, recognized learning a second language is a difficult task and ELLs need extra time to develop their language skills by expressing:

> English language learners are a little bit slower and hesitant to participate in the class. And not to put people on the spot, but I let them know that it's not really going to be an option because I'm trying to create a community. And a community means that you participate and what that looks like. … And I find by week four, week five,

> people have learned that they've got to figure out where they're going to insert themselves, so that they can participate. And they usually get there.

Additionally, when recognizing ELLs' challenges with English writing skills, Victoria shared giving ELLs extra time by allowing them to use Grammarly, a free writing software, artificial intelligence, and other translational devices:

> And I tell them. It's OK that they're using translational devices to help them…but for them to let me know as best they can what they think would help them, or what I could do differently for them. Sometimes they do and a lot of times they don't. Grammar-wise, I work with the class as a whole on grammar. So, it isn't just certain students, it's all students. I show them that they could get free Grammarly, or that there are other apps too, basically AI, to help them. I know that as a teacher, I don't want to send something that is misspelled or… I will have Grammarly sitting in my e-mail and so forth, so that I can model for the students. …Basically, all of us are still working on grammar through every class year. Not just teaching the science of nutrition…but also how to write a proper e-mail to a professor… things that will help them be more successful and…communicate their needs in a way that a professor understands.

To be culturally responsive, researchers support educators' verbal and non-verbal language, such as taking more time to explain content and concepts, making learning materials available, and being explicit with ELLs (Albusaidi, 2019; King & Bailey, 2021; Housel, 2021; Yeh et al., 2021).

Less than half of the study's sample (5 of 12 [41%]) expressed making minor adjustments to their instruction to help ELLs succeed in the classroom. On this matter, Anna, being an Arabic speaker herself, did not regard punctuality as important and made minor adjustments to her coming-to-class-on-time policy for ELLs from Arab backgrounds by starting class late:

> In Arabic culture like we don't have this… like… being prompt on time is not considered important. So, like it's okay for people to be late. If that makes sense. So, for me like I don't mind it when my students are late because I am very used to that. So, I usually, like the first 15 minutes, don't do important things. It's more like low things and checking in so that way… I know they will come late…(laughs).

Lisa also learned being on time is not important in Korean culture and made minor adjustments to her instruction after losing a Korean student for being late to class a few times when she explained, "And I learned never to call a student out again from anywhere for any reason unless you really have a rapport with them to know that it's safe to do so with that student."

Eve adjusted her instruction using visuals instead of definitions in her science class sometimes as she previously stated struggling to understand ELLs' written work:

> Sometimes, I'll have them draw on something. That's like an equalizer because it's just drawing, you know, like draw what a river is to you. They draw and then we discuss it. We talk about the pieces. Instead of offering like a definition, we look at a visual definition. And then, we go from there. And that, combined with those words, can be very useful because you have the visuals, and then you have the word.

In her communication studies class, Tara made minor instructional adjustments by "letting them [shy ELLs] create a video or some other project where it's not…Or a PowerPoint presentation instead of having to contemporary …contemporaneously speak. Whatever it is." While Ana supports minor adjustments in instruction for ELLs due to their holidays, she also challenged the idea it is not always beneficial:

> Students have different holidays or days that are important to them… that aren't part of the college schedule, then it's hard because they're going to miss those classes to be celebrating their families …then so… I mean, I don't know, like whats ever???... I usually let them make up stuff, but it's still hard because even if they make up stuff, they still miss the whole lesson.

However, when asked about suggestions to increase participation among ELLs in the classroom, Brad did not support making minor adjustments to his instruction by sharing:

> I don't have good ideas. I like the design of my course where they gotta participate…I just…. There's no choice because I'm sure this is a huge issue. That this is probably an issue #1 if you're teaching a course with English language learners in it and your… It's an open classroom environment lecture. How do you…. how do you keep these students involved with…with without frustrating the other students in the class ….and embarrassing these students? That's complicated. I don't have any good ideas.

While educators' perspectives revealed their use of instructional strategies to support ELLs, their perspectives also resembled the importance of creating a safe learning space for ELLs.

Theme 7: Educators creating a safe learning space for ELLs

Throughout the individual interviews and one focus group session, educators mentioned building relationships with ELLs (8 of 12 [66%]) and bringing their abroad experiences (4 of 12 [33%]) to create a safe learning space for ELLs. Steven acknowledged the importance of talking to students at the door before or after class or around campus when he stated:

> I can speculate as to why that is, but you need to develop a relationship that's outside of the classroom. And it doesn't have to be much, but just enough that you

> acknowledge that they are there, like… we know who you are. That we are glad to see you. That you're welcome here, and we're happy you're here.

When asked about the most or least rewarding of her relationships with ELLs, Tara believed in helping ELLs feel like they belong even during office hours:

> A lot of students go through homesickness, or they go through. They go through trying to find their way in a new country...When, like, students come to your office, and they like…hang out and they feel like a connection, and it makes them feel less lonely. It makes them feel like they belong, right? You really want to help them feel like they belong…

Upon reflecting on her cultural training, Lisa applied her cultural knowledge to build better relationships with ELLs from Korea outside the classroom:

> As I was talking to a student after class and was face to face with him, I positioned myself so we were face to face, and the student kept moving to being next to me. Subconsciously, I kept moving to be face to face with them until all of a sudden, I remembered my training. And said: "Oh, plant your feet, Lisa. Let him adjust to what's comfortable to him." Afterward, I looked it up, and sure enough. In Korean culture, you want to be side by side. This is confrontational, right? (Uses back-and-forth hand movement).

Additionally, Debbie noticed students did much better after organizing Zoom meetings with ELLs to build relationships with them online "And all the students who have done that, do much better. But I'm going to require that they do to kind of make a link." In the focus group session, Debbie elaborated on building relationships with ELLs after class:

> And I ask the students a lot about….to tell me like where they're from, what it's like, how it's different, why they came to the college where we are. Just to get them to talk and to share because often other students have a similar experience. But I learned a tremendous amount from them. It's amazing. And that continues after the class also.

When teachers show a supportive environment and openness to students, students not only feel a sense of security, which positively impacts their academic success but also improves their social life (Alzouebi et al., 2020; Housel, 2021; Lan, 2020; Mat Razi & Rahmat, 2020; Ponciano et al., 2020).

Only a small number of educators (4 of 12 [33%]) expressed bringing their abroad experiences to the classroom to assist ELLs. Because she is a traveler, Debbie admitted to bringing her abroad experiences to assist ELLs in writing papers after class:

> I am sensitive to them and feel for them. I know how difficult… I'm a traveler, and I know how difficult it can be. I think most of them are kind of…they have a lot of fear, and so I try to support them…help them. I try to help them. They don't have to write papers in my class, but I try to help them. They might be applying for something... so I spend a lot of time abroad …and connecting and understanding students with that. And I bring those experiences. They shaped me as a person and so … as a teacher again … and as an artist to help them understand in class.

Tara let ELLs choose their own seats or sit together to assist ELLs in the classroom when she reflected on her own communication limitations in Latin American abroad experiences:

> Because I also let them choose their own seats in class…I've never been that one of those professors that, like, tells people where they have to sit because I feel like that's disempowering. And I do find that students like to cluster in class by people from the same countries that they're from. Which is OK. I mean, I lived in Paraguay for a couple of years, where I spoke only Spanish and Guarani, and I used to love to come to the capital city and meet up with other volunteers and just be able to speak English for a few days. So, I can understand the appeal.

Culturally, Tara further pointed out the differences between living abroad for a long period and having students from diverse backgrounds in her classroom: "I think it's less impactful to have students from different backgrounds in my classes versus living in other places." On the other hand, Steven shared bringing his abroad experiences but found language to be a barrier when working with ELLs:

> Like they were doing a basketball thing in China and. Yeah, there was sort of an administrator, who's Chinese and we're about the same age. And he did not speak much English, I don't speak, much Chinese for at all. We both love basketball….We both knew…we both could sort of communicate just through basketball, right? We would sit there and watch the games and we knew exactly what we each were talking about. And so that was always fun. I get those same people here. And if they are coming to the class, that means that we have some connection… in the same class learning the same stuff. That's always going to be a lot of fun, just seeing how many people reacted to things. The only hard part is language barriers, but that'… Google Translate makes that kind of easy.

Upon reflecting on their teaching experiences with ELLs from diverse backgrounds, educators shared building relationships with ELLs and bringing their abroad experiences as strategies they believed supported the ESL learning process of ELLs through their cultural competence.

3. Conclusion

Despite educators' limited cultural competence and uneasiness toward ELLs from diverse cultural backgrounds, most felt prepared to teach ELLs, which was unexpected based on the study's research problem. Educators' beliefs on their preparedness were based on their shared cultural and linguistic backgrounds with ELLs, the tools and resources used by educators, and educators' certifications to teach ELLs. Educators using scaffolding tools such as technology (PowerPoint, Google translate, Grammarly, artificial intelligence, and translational devices) and institutional resources (translators or referring students to tutoring services) influenced their preparedness to teach ELLs. I further identified that educators' beliefs on their preparedness were based on their use of language by explicitly demonstrating classroom activities along with body movement while others wrote activities on the board to communicate with students.

All educators perceived they supported the ESL learning process of ELLs by including culture in their instruction to get students to participate in classroom activities. Including students' culture in classroom activities motivates students to be engaged in discussions and, therefore, enhances students' language skills. As educators are the key to student success, improving educators' cultural competence will facilitate more meaningful interactions in higher education spaces.

Findings indicate educators made minor adjustments to their instruction to help ELLs succeed in the classroom. A few educators supported ELLs by using visuals instead of definitions and letting ELLs create videos or PowerPoint presentations instead of presenting in class if they were shy or not confident enough with their language skills. A few educators adjusted their coming-to-class-on-time policies for ELLs.

Additionally, I identified educators perceived they supported the ESL learning process of ELLs by building relationships with ELLs to create a safe learning space for ELLs. As faculty-student relationships shape student success (Curtis, 2020; Dwyer, 2019; Housel, 2021; King & Bailey, 2021), higher education institutions must consider improving educators' cultural competence to support and improve the ESL learning of ELLs. Further research is warranted to delve deeper into these findings.

5. Future Research

Three recommendations for future research are discussed in this section. First, the study's sample size was relatively small, consisting of 12 participants, with over half identifying as European-American. Therefore, future research with a larger and more diverse sample should enhance the generalizability of the findings. Second, future researchers can improve upon this study by extending the sample size across institutions with multiple case studies and exploring several research sites. The final recommendation to improve this research study is a longitudinal study design. A longitudinal perspective could shed light on the evolution of educators' cultural competence over time and its long-term impact on ELLs' learning outcomes.

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Equating and Contrasting in Religious Contexts: A Critical Stylistic Study

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Abstract

In this study 'equating and contrasting' as a textual-conceptual tool of analysis within the frame of critical stylistics is utilized. It is aimed at demonstrating the textual triggers which reflect equating and contrasting in religious texts in order to extract the implied ideologies. The data consists of selected religious discourses from the Prophet Mohammed's tradition regarding his Household. The study concludes that there are certain textual triggers reflecting equating as well as contrasting in the Prophet Mohammed's sayings about his Household. Equating is utilised to reflect the state in which the Household is made identical to the Prophet Mohammed. The ideological implications of equating are textually produced through a number of textual triggers such as: Intensive relational equivalence, Appositional equivalence, Metaphorical equivalence, and Parallel Structure. Contrasting, on the other hand, reveals the exclusivity of salvation to the Household excluding any other possible pathways. The ideological implications of contrasting are textually produced through two textual triggers only: Parallelism and Transitional structure.

***Keywords*:** Critical Stylistics, Equating and Contrasting, Ideology, Religious Discourse

1. Introduction

Little academic devotion has been targeted by researchers to investigating the textual elements of equating and contrasting in religious texts within the framework of critical stylistics (henceforth CS). Earlier works in relation to this work can be read in Hussein and Ibrahim (2021) investigating *Equating and Contrasting* in English proverbs regarding men and women to reveal the sexist ideologies. The study concludes that men and women are equated as well as contrasted in a worldview constructed by the text producers. Another study conducted by Mohammed and Qasim (2023) probing explicit as well as implicit confutation in religious texts within the frame of critical stylistics. The study aimed at uncovering the hidden ideologies through operating the tools: *Naming and describing, Implying and Assuming, Negating,* and *Hypothesizing* revealing the way the confuter and the confutee disclose their hidden ideologies during their encounter. A further study of religious texts within the frame of critical stylistics has been done by Sahan (2021) investigating tolerance in English-Arabic religious texts. One tool of analysis was employed *Implying and Assuming* only. The study aimed at making a comparison between English and Arabic religious discourses probing the ideology of tolerance through the textual triggers.

No prominent emphasis on investigating the sole role of 'equating and contrasting' has been adequately done on religious discourse; this article takes the accountability of examining this textual-conceptual tool of analysis in the context of religion to assess its integration along with extracting its ideological implications**.** The tool of analysis operates on two levels of form and function. Formally, there are a number of textual triggers which lead the reader to the functional/ ideological implications in religious texts. In this study, it is aimed at providing answers for the following research questions:

1. What are the textual triggers found in religious discourse reflecting equating as well as contrasting as a textual-conceptual tool in CS?
2. Which textual trigger is most commonly utilized in the selected data?
3. What are the ideological implications behind utilizing equating as well as contrasting in religious texts as a textual-conceptual tool in CS?

2. Critical Stylistics

CS arose as a valuable method for addressing ideology in language functioning as a bridge between stylistics and critical discourse analysis. The term was first coined by Jeffries (2007) to establish a stream of stylistics which focused on ideology, demonstrating the applicability of stylistic analysis to both literary and non-literary texts. This led Jeffries to conclude that the same analytical methods are needed for all types of textual analysis. Thus, meaning in texts is formed in essentially the same way. Jeffries (2014) stated that stylistic analysis is the heart of the endeavor to see the power in language.

Like other approaches of critical linguistic analyses, CS is regarded as a method which examines the ideology in texts (Jeffries, 2014a). CS, nevertheless, suggests that one feature of language such as nominalization, in previous critical approaches, is only one way of perceiving how meanings are created by texts (Jeffries, 2014b). According to Jeffries (2010), a variety of instruments can be used to demonstrate how texts often influence readers to change their ideological viewpoints in order to align with the viewpoints of the texts' authors. Jeffries (2010) perceives stylistics to be focusing on the choices made by the text producers. The text producers are bound to the pressure of making the exact choices suitable for expressing their intention. Those choices, whether consciously or not, are always ideologically loaded.

CS refers to stylistic products that study the ways in which language reflects social meanings. Critical linguistics (revealing underlying power structure and social relations through linguistic analysis) along with CDA (the study of language to uncover powers, ideology, and social inequality in society) paved the way for the emergence of critical stylistic forms of study and analysis. Critical linguistics was initiated by Roger Fowler and his colleagues Gunther Kress, Robert Hodge, and Tony Trew. They investigated the ways in which social meanings like ideology and power are reflected by means of language, and the way language affects our perception of the world [(Fowler, *et al.* 1979; Fowler, 1991) cited in Nørgaard *et al.*, 2010:11)].

The textual-conceptual functions permit researchers to associate *what the text is doing* with *how it is doing it.*

*T*he employment of the textual-conceptual tools sets CS apart from previous critical approaches to linguistics where the latter approaches hold that one linguistic feature can produce different kinds of textual meaning. As an instance, transitivity helps to illustrate the way text equate otherwise diverse elements by means of the equating tool. CS, however, suggests that one feature of language such as nominalization, in previous critical

approaches, is only one way of perceiving how meanings are created by texts. There is an idea that lies at the heart of CS which holds that there is a level of meaning that is placed between the systematic meaning (*'langue'* in Saussuean term), and the contextual meaning of language use (*parole'* in Saussurean term). The text or utterance, at this level, employs the resources of language to give a specific world-view. The analyst has to find out "what the text is doing" and "how it is presenting the world" using the tools proposed in this framework known as "textual-conceptual functions." This is intended to show that texts can produce certain kinds of meaning in different ways (Jeffries, 2014). As a result, Jeffries (2010) contends that the instruments offer a present-participle response to this question represented in ten textual-conceptual tools of analysis:

1. Naming and Describing
2. Presenting Actions/Events/States
3. Exemplifying and Enumerating
4. Prioritizing
5. Negating
6. Presenting the Speech and Thoughts of Others
7. Equating and Contrasting
8. Implying and Assuming
9. Hypothesizing
10. Presenting Time, Space and Society

Here comes the role of the Hallidayan (1994) notion of the three language metafunctions (ideational, interpersonal, and textual), in order to set the textual meaning within context. For the framework Jeffries proposed, she drew on the idea of 'ideational' meaning in the underlying linguistic system and related it to the language use in context. When the system of language is operated, the ideation is activated too. The crucial point to be stressed upon is that meaning making is achieved through the use of language in texts, and not what the language is producing.

3. Equating and Contrasting

In CS, equating refers to linguistic strategies that present two equivalent concepts, often through metaphors, similes, or grammatical structures like apposition, creating relations which propose sameness or shared propositions. Contrasting, on the other hand, considers differences between two concepts through juxtaposition, antithesis, or contrasting lexical choices, emphasizing distinctions and opposing meanings to form meaning and manifest ideologies. In order to enhance detecting equivalence or opposition in text, Jeffries (2010) lists a number of textual triggers to aid the analysts extracting each parameter (i.e. equating and contrasting) and finally uncover hidden ideologies in text.

Lexical semanticists assume that there can never be two exactly identical words in language and even the very close synonyms show some grammatical variations. Nevertheless, there are some lexical elements which show semantic equivalence and many dictionaries indicate that meaning equivalence is mentally real for language users. The case for antonyms is not any different. Language professionals, teachers and dictionary makers

propose that there is a semantic link jointing particular pairs of lexical elements known as antonyms i.e. a wide range of relationships of opposition where all semantic features except one are opposed. Different types of antonyms like gradable, converseness, etc. serve one function in the minds of recipients. The assumption is that the opposite meaning is more prominent compared with variation among types of opposition. Texts are able to set up novel synonyms and antonyms, either between words which seem unrelated out of context, or between phrases, clauses and even paragraphs. There are syntactic frames set up for words and phrases to create textual equivalence and opposition and thus creating relationships. The typical syntactic frames to set up opposition is (it was X not Y), and for equating (it was X, Y). The following are a figure illustrating possible types of equivalence in text:

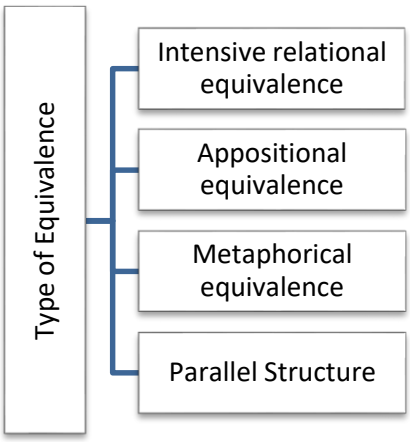


Diagram 1. Types of Equivalence

Table 1. Textual Triggers for Equating (Jeffries, 2010:59)

Type of Equivalence	Syntactic trigger
Intensive relational equivalence	X is Y; X seems Y; X became Y; Z made X Y; Z thinks X Y; Z caused X to become Y, etc.
Appositional equivalence	X, Y, (z)…
Metaphorical equivalence	X is Y, the X of Y, X is like Y
Parallel Structure	X is Y. X is Z

Table (1) demonstrates the types along with the syntactic triggers of equivalence in text.

On the other hand, contrasting can be expressed through a variety of method manifesting differences and oppositions. The figure (2) lists the possible types of contrasting in text. The table (2) shares a list of different linguistic realizations or syntactic triggers of opposition in English

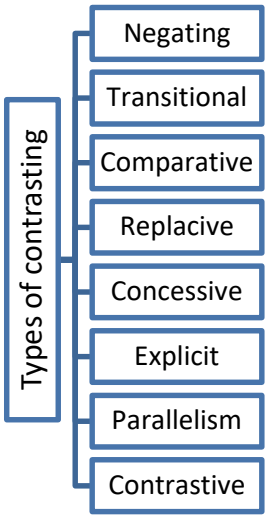


Diagram 2. Types of Contrasting

Table 2. Opposition linguistic trigger (Jeffries,2010)

Negated	X not Y; Some X, no Y; Plenty of X, a lack of Y
Transitional	turn X into Y; From X to Y; X become Y
Comparative	more X than Y; Less X than Y
Replacive	X instead of Y; X rather than Y; X in preference of Y
Concessive	despite X, Y; X, yet Y; X, still Y
Explicit	X, by contrast with Y; X, as opposite to Y
Parallelism	he like X, she likes Y; Yours is X, mine is Y
Contrastive	X, but Y

In its simplest sense, as Jeffries (2014b) discusses, the ideological implications of such a textual-conceptual tool can well illustrate the negative-positive, good-bad, moral-immoral orientations of subjects in question, i.e. to validate or invalidate actions as well as legitimating certain practices that otherwise would be perceived to be illegal or inhumane. Davies (2013) adds that the employment of opposition may serve to orient the reader towards one direction or group or idea in favor of the other. The favored ones are associated with positive values and ethics and thus gain acceptance; whereas the unflavored ones are portrayed through negative principles and hence be rejected.

4. Religious Discourse

It is suggested by Harrison (2006) that the texts carry power. They can summon up a reality beyond the appearances as they unite the audience with something beyond themselves, with something unutterable. The components of texts hold power even when referred to in past. Mentioning them hold meaning. They have power to push believers to act similar to the case where the call to prayer summonses people to the neighbourhood mosque. The Sacred texts, hadiths, sermons, and catechisms are, indeed, of value for how people and communities come to comprehend and follow religions. They place the basis for religious faith and

practice and can be the decisive authorities. Nevertheless, they form only part of the story of religious discourse. Official documents and sacred books are recited and activated by actual people in actual contexts. Believers listen to theologians and educators, and then continue living their own lives interpreting these texts in their societies.

Harrison (2006) classifies three attitudes to religion: intellectual, concerned with belief; affective, concerned with emotions; and functional, concerned with practice. Each of these attitudes concentrations on specific religions over others and carries implicit merits and demerits. Discourse is structured when all the components of the system act together with the time and space in which they occur. These components might embrace significant figures namely imams or priests or leaders, or significant holy texts or unprinted doctrines. On the other hand, the patterns that arise among individuals interacting with one another around religious matters are also measureable which on larger scales can also arise as consistent discourse practices. This can be perceived among, for instance, praying believers in a certain religious tradition which reflects how religious discourse is rooted in larger systems and how discourse exists in time. What precedes and follows individual interaction can be of significance, with instructions uttered or written thousands of years ago being repeated in the modern-day discourse and, in turn, what religious believers say and write now, influencing how religious belief will advance going forward. Time scales can be measured on several levels, from the moment-by-moment collaboration of people to the discourse event as one in a series of discourse events, and over years. Religious discourse recounts Critical Stylistics by means of examining how language in religious texts, speeches, or practices constructs worldviews and then reflects ideologies and power relations. Critical Stylistics analyzes the linguistic features of religious discourse to uncover implicit significances and ideological factors. Religious discourse recurrently utilizes metaphors and symbolic language, which Critical Stylistics analyzes to probe underlying ideologies

5. Methodology and data selection

This work is a qualitative descriptive study of selected sayings of the Prophet Mohammed[saww] in relation to his Household[1] (*Ali*[asws], *(Syeda) Fatima*[asws], *Al-Husayn*[asws], *Al-Hassan*[asws]). For each extract the Arabic version is narrated along with its English translation. The translation is cited from the site: Hobeali.com. All Extracts are cited form Bihar Al Anwaar V23, The Book of Imamate. Each extract is documented immediately after its English translation mentioning the page number, the chapter, and the hadith sequence in the book. Selective sampling (criterion-based sampling) technique has been followed; texts (Hadiths) which carry textual equivalence and opposition has been selected for analysis. Hadiths with no such textual triggers have been excluded.

The model of analysis is Critical stylistics proposed by Jeffries (2010). The textual-conceptual tool employed for the analysis is 'equating and contrasting'. The extracts are analyzed on two layers of form and function; formally, the analysis traces the textual triggers

[1] See also:
https://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D8%A3%D9%87%D9%84_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%AA

provided by the model of analysis, whereas, functionally, ideological implications are extracted through the formal aspects of language (i.e. textual triggers).

6. Data Analysis

Extract (1)

45- ن، عيون أخبار الرضا عليه السلام بِالْأَسَانِيدِ الثَّلَاثَةِ عَنِ الرِّضَا عَنْ آبَائِهِ ع قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص مَثَلُ أَهْلِ بَيْتِي فِيكُمْ مَثَلُ سَفِينَةِ نُوحٍ مَنْ رَكِبَهَا نَجَا وَ مَنْ تَخَلَّفَ عَنْهَا زُجَّ فِي النَّارِ.

(The book) 'Uyoon Akhbar Al-Reza[asws] by the three chains from Al-Reza[asws] from his[asws] forefathers[asws] having said: 'Rasool-Allah[saww] said: ***'And example of the People[asws] of my[saww] Household is an example of the ship of Noaha's. One who sails it is saved and one who stays behind from it would fall into the Fire''.*** (Bihar Al Anwaar – V 23, The book of Imamate, P 1 Ch 7 H 45)

إِنَّمَا مَثَلُ أَهْلِ بَيْتِي فِيكُمْ كَمَثَلِ سَفِينَةِ نُوحٍ مَنْ رَكِبَهَا نَجَا وَ مَنْ تَخَلَّفَ عَنْهَا غَرِقَ وَ مَثَلِ بَابِ حِطَّةٍ مَنْ دَخَلَهُ نَجَا وَ مَنْ لَمْ يَدْخُلْهُ هَلَكَ.

But rather the People[asws] of the Household among you all is like an example of the ship of Noaha's. The one who sails it would attain salvation, and the one who stays behind from it, would drown; and an example of the door of Hitta (among the Children of Israel). The one who enters it attains salvation, and the one who does not enter it would be destroyed!'' (Bihar Al Anwaar – V 23, The book of Imamate, P 1 Ch 7 H 3)

Analysis:

Form (textual triggers):

Equating in extract (1) is demonstrated through the structure 'Intensive relational equivalence' which can be represented by the syntactic trigger (X is like Y); the People[asws] of the Household (X) among you all <u>is like</u> an example of the ship of Noaha's (Y).

Such formal structure draws a comparison between the Household of the prophet Mohammed and the ship of the prophet Noah. Equating these two images carries **ideological implications**:

- both ships are driven by a prophet; the ship of the Household is led by the prophet Mohammed similar to the ship of Noah which is led by Him.
- the ship of Noah was the only sailing ship during the flood; its passengers were the only survivors of that flood.

The analogy is highlighted more in the second point referring to the situation is which following the path of the prophet and his Household is the only path to salvation; this can be perceived though the selection of a contrasting structure as: (They are X; Others are Y) "*The*

one who sails it (X) would attain salvation, and the one who stays behind from it (Y), would drown".

Contrasting is demonstrated utilizing both the transitional structure (X become Y) as well as parallel structure. '*The one (X) who enters it attains salvation (becomes Y), and the one (X) who does not enter it would be destroyed (turns into Y)*'. Parallelism shows the opposition of two phrases: '*The one who enters it attains salvation'* is opposed to '*the one who does not enter it would be destroyed*'.

Ideological Implications:

Ideologically such a construction offers the reader with a pair of extreme choices: one leads to the virtue; the other leads to the corruption. The text reader will have to make a choice according to the worldview created.

Selecting textual opposition creates a worldview in which two opposing orientations or ideologies are juxtaposed; one choice leads to salvation while the other leads to damnation. This structure serves to guide the audience to accepting the virtuous pathway and reject the negative one. Such an opposition implies the exclusiveness of salvation to the ship of the Household. Similar to the ship of Noah which was the only salvation from the flood (destruction); no other pathway can bring salvation other than that of the households'. (see also Al-Harawi, 2015)

Extract (2)

وَ مَثَلُ الْأَئِمَّةِ مِنْ وُلْدِكَ بَعْدِي مَثَلُ سَفِينَةِ نُوحٍ مَنْ رَكِبَهَا نَجَا وَ مَنْ تَخَلَّفَ عَنْهَا غَرِقَ وَ مَثَلُكُمْ مَثَلُ النُّجُومِ كُلَّمَا غَابَ نَجْمٌ طَلَعَ نَجْمٌ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ.

*And an example of the Imams[asws] from your[asws] sons[asws] after me[saww] is an example of the ship of Noaha's. One who sails it is saved and one who stays behind from it drowns, and your[asws] example is an example of the stars. Every time a star disappears, a star appears, up to the Day of Qiyamah'' (*Bihar Al Anwaar – V 23, The book of Imamate, P 1 Ch 7 H 53)

Analysis:

Form (textual triggers):

Textual equivalence is demonstrated through the employment of metaphorical equivalence with the textual trigger: 'X is like Y'. The inceptive part of the extract has been analyzed in Extract (1). The second part of the extract projects equivalence in : "*And an example of the Imams[asws]..... is an example of the stars.".* The analogy is made between the *Imams* and *stars*; the stars are regarder as signs of guidance functioning as a compass showing the right path. Similarly, *Imams* are metaphorically referred to as guiding stars to salvation. Tenor (x) is the main entity is further described and elucidated by vehicle (Y).

Table 3. Metaphorical equivalence in Extract (2)

Tenor (X): entity being described	**Vehicle (Y):** entity describing the tenor
Imams[asws] from your[asws] sons[asws]	*the ship of Noaha's*
	the stars

Textual opposition, although not explicitly stated, can be infered form the inceptive structure of the extract '*And an example of the Imams[asws] from your[asws] sons[asws] after me[saww] is an example of the ship of Noahas.* ***One who sails it is saved and one who stays behind from it drowns'.*** The opposition can be infered as such: *one who follow the stars is saved and the one who doesn't will be lost in the dark.* Structurally, transitional structure (X become Y) as well as parallel structure are utilized. 'one (X) who follow the stars is saved (becomes Y) and the one (X) who doesn't will be lost in the dark (becomes Y).

Exract (3)

وَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ قَوْلُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ لِعَلِيٍّ ع مَنْ كُنْتُ مَوْلَاهُ فَعَلِيٌّ مَوْلَاهُ اللَّهُمَّ وَالِ مَنْ وَالَاهُ وَ عَادِ مَنْ عَادَاهُ وَ انْصُرْ مَنْ نَصَرَهُ وَ اخْذُلْ مَنْ خَذَلَهُ وَ أَحِبَّ مَنْ أَحَبَّهُ وَ أَبْغِضْ مَنْ أَبْغَضَهُ.

*And from that are the words of Rasool-Allah[azwj] to Ali[asws]: 'One whose Master[saww] I[saww] was, so Ali[asws] is his Master[asws]. O Allah[azwj]! Befriend the ones who befriends him[asws] and be Inimical to the one who is inimical to him[asws], and Help the one who helps him[asws], and Abandon the one who abandons him[asws], and Love the ones who loves him[asws], and Hate the one who hates him[asws] ''. (*Bihar Al Anwaar – V 23, The book of Imamate, P 1 Ch 6 H 11)

Analysis:

Form (textual triggers):

Formally, equating is demonstrated through the employment of the metaphorical equivalence (X is Y) as well as parallel structure (X is Y, Z is Y). *One whose Master[saww] (Y) I[saww] (X) was, so Ali[asws] (Z) is his Master[asws](Y).* In the inceptive part of the extract the two figures, Rasool-Allah[azwj] and Ali[asws] are equated as Ali[asws] is given an identical value as Allah[azwj]. **Ideologically**, there is an implication that Ali[asws] is the successor of Rasool-Allah[azwj] due to the numerous virtues and privileges Ali[asws] has over other companions of Rasool-Allah[azwj]. For the detailed narrative of Ghadir Khum see (Ghadir Khumm in the Qur'an, Hadith, History, see also Al-Suyuti, 1957).

The second part of the extract demonstrates a pair of contrasting structures as shown below.

Table 4. Positive vs Negative connotation in Extract (3)

Positive connotation	**Negative connotation**
Befriend the ones who befriends him[asws]	*be Inimical to the one who is inimical to him[asws]*
Help the one who helps him[asws],	*Abandon the one who abandons him[asws],*
Love the ones who loves him[asws],	*Hate the one who hates him[asws]* ’’

The phrases with positive connotation are presented first then juxtaposed with phrases with negative connotation. Such a parallelism in structure is utilized to create a worldview for the receptor to make a choice mindfully between vice and virtue; the totality of virtue is oriented to Ali[asws] in the first group of phrases carrying positive connotation; whereas the vice is oriented to the ones who are against Ali[asws], represented through the phrases carrying negative connotation.

Ideological Implications:

There is an explicit declaration by Rasool-Allah[azwj] that the pathway of Ali[asws] is exclusively the pathway to salvation which is identical to the one of Rasool-Allah[azwj]. It is worth mentioning that the incident of Ghadir Khum had happened in response to the Quranic verse on Rasool-Allah[azwj] "*O Apostle! Deliver what has been sent down to you from your Lord; and if you don't do it, you have not delivered His message (at all); and Allah will protect you from the people* ..." (Qur'an 5:67). Such equivalence can also be noticed in extract (4) as well.

Extract (4)

53- ك، إكمال الدين لي، الأمالي للصدوق ابْنُ الْبَرْقِيِّ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ جَدِّهِ عَنْ غِيَاثِ بْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَنْ ثَابِتِ بْنِ دِينَارٍ عَنْ سَعْدِ بْنِ طَرِيفٍ عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ جُبَيْرٍ عَنِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ لِعَلِيِّ بْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ يَا عَلِيُّ أَنَا مَدِينَةُ الْحِكْمَةِ وَ أَنْتَ بَابُهَا وَ لَنْ تُؤْتَى الْمَدِينَةُ إِلَّا مِنْ قِبَلِ الْبَابِ وَ كَذَبَ مَنْ زَعَمَ أَنَّهُ يُحِبُّنِي وَ يُبْغِضُكَ لِأَنَّكَ مِنِّي وَ أَنَا مِنْكَ لَحْمُكَ مِنْ لَحْمِي وَ دَمُكَ مِنْ دَمِي وَ رُوحُكَ مِنْ رُوحِي وَ سَرِيرَتُكَ سَرِيرَتِي وَ عَلَانِيَتُكَ عَلَانِيَتِي

*‘Rasool-Allah[saww] said to Ali[asws] Bin Abu Talib[asws]: ‘**O Ali[asws]! I[saww] am the city of wisdom and you[asws] are its door, and the city can never be come to except from the direction of its door, and he lies, the one who claims that he loves me[saww] and hates you[asws], because you[asws] are from me[saww] and I[saww] am from you[asws]. Your[asws] flesh is from my[saww] flesh, and your[asws] blood is from my[saww] blood, and your[asws] soul is from my[saww] soul, and your[asws] secrets are my[saww] secrets and your proclamations are my[saww] proclamations.***

Analysis:

Form (textual triggers):

The type of Equivalence is that of Metaphorical equivalence represented by means of the textual trigger (the X of Y). The sort of metaphor employed is that of synecdoche (i.e. mentioning the part to refer to whole). In (4) the synecdoche is manifested through a metaphorical expression in which the whole is embodied by Rasool-Allah[saww] being ***the city of wisdom*** **(Y);** *Ali[asws]* is *its* ***door*** (X) embodying the part to that whole. Thus, Ali[asws] is metaphorically illustrated as part of Rasool-Allah[saww].

Ideological Implications:

The ideological factors can be entailed form the rest of hadith ***the city can never be come to except from the direction of its door.*** It can be entailed that following Rasool-Allah[saww] is conditioned by following the one he[saww] appointed as trustworthy i.e. Ali[asws] solely. In later part of the extract the metaphorical equivalence is recalled through the text: ***you[asws] are from me[saww] and I[saww] am from you[asws].*** There is an equivalence between the two figures where each one of them is part of the other. This manifests a sense of identicallity between the two which reinforces the ideologies discussed in extract (3).

Extract (5)

12- وَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ فِي هَذَا الْمَعْنَى مَا رَوَاهُ الشَّافِعِيُّ ابْنُ الْمَغَازِلِيِّ مِنْ عِدَّةِ طُرُقٍ فِي كِتَابِهِ بِأَسَانِيدِهَا فَمِنْهَا قَالَ إِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ص قَالَ: إِنِّي أُوشَكُ أَنْ أُدْعَى فَأُجِيبَ وَ إِنِّي تَارِكٌ فِيكُمُ الثَّقَلَيْنِ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ حَبْلٌ مَمْدُودٌ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ وَ عِتْرَتِي أَهْلَ بَيْتِي وَ إِنَّ اللَّطِيفَ الْخَبِيرَ أَخْبَرَنِي أَنَّهُمَا لَنْ يَفْتَرِقَا حَتَّى يَرِدَا عَلَيَّ الْحَوْضَ فَانْظُرُوا مَا ذَا تُخْلِفُونِّي فِيهِمَا.

And from that in this meaning is what is reported by Al Shafie Ibn Al Maghazily, from a number of ways in his book, by their chains, and from these is, 'Rasool-Allah[saww] said: ***'I[saww] am about to be called and I[saww] will answer, and I[saww] am leaving behind among you all the two weighty things – Book of Allah[azwj], a rope extended from the sky to the earth, and my[saww] family the People[asws] of my[saww] household, and the Subtle, the Informed has Informed me[saww] that these two will never separate until they return to me at the Fountain, therefore look at what you are dealing with me[saww] regarding these two''. (***Bihar Al Anwaar – V 23, The book of Imamate, P 1 Ch 7 H 12).

7- يف، الطرائف رُوِيَ عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ حَنْبَلٍ فِي مُسْنَدِهِ بِإِسْنَادِهِ إِلَى أَبِي سَعِيدٍ الْخُدْرِيِّ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص إِنِّي قَدْ تَرَكْتُ فِيكُمُ الثَّقَلَيْنِ مَا إِنْ تَمَسَّكْتُمْ بِهِمَا لَنْ تَضِلُّوا بَعْدِي وَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِنَ الْآخَرِ كِتَابُ اللَّهِ حَبْلٌ مَمْدُودٌ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ وَ عِتْرَتِي أَهْلُ بَيْتِي أَلَا وَ إِنَّهُمَا لَنْ يَفْتَرِقَا حَتَّى يَرِدَا عَلَيَّ الْحَوْضَ.

(The book) 'Al Taraif' – It is reported from Ahmad Bin Hanbal in his (book) 'Musnad', by his chain going up to Saeed Al Khudry who said, 'Rasool-Allah[saww] said: ***'I[saww] am leaving***

behind among you the two weighty things, what if you were to adhere with these two, you will never go astray after me[saww], and one of the two is greater than the other – Book of Allah[azwj] being a rope extended from the sky to the earth, and my[saww] family the People[asws] of my[saww] Household. Indeed! And these two will never separate until they return to me[saww] at the Fountain''. *(*Bihar Al Anwaar – V 23, The book of Imamate, P 1 Ch 7 H 7).

Analysis:

Form (textual triggers):

The appositional structure in the extract utilizes two phrases adjacent to each other with no comma separating the two. The reason is that the second noun phrase carries extra information about the entity referred to from a number of possible alternatives. The appositional equivalence can be represented by the two phrases (12) (*my[saww]* family) (the *People[asws] of my[saww] Household*) as well as (7) *(Book of Allah[azwj]) (a rope extended from the sky to the earth)* are adjacently structured with no comma in between. The lack of comma between the two opposed structures coveys that the second phrase for each structure is providing extra information about the first phrase; in (12) the second phrase (the *People[asws] of my[saww] Household*) is specifying the identity of the people referred to in the first phrase (*my[saww]* family) from a number of other possible people. In other words, the reference to the Household is in fact a reference to the family of Rasool-Allah[saww] i.e. Ali[asws], (Syeda) Fatima[asws], Al-Hassan[asws], and Al-Husayn[asws].

In (7), the two phrases are referring to one entity which is the *Book of Allah[azwj]*. The second phrase *(a rope extended from the sky to the earth)* is providing more information which specifies more the entity in the first phrase.

Ideological Implications:

Such a structure is elaborative in terms of who the members of Household are and what is the Book of Allah[azwj].

Extract (6)

95- فض، كتاب الروضة يل، الفضائل لابن شاذان بِالْإِسْنَادِ يَرْفَعُهُ إِلَى الْإِمَامِ جَعْفَرِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ جَدِّهِ عَلِيِّ بْنِ الْحُسَيْنِ ع عَنْ جَابِرٍ الْأَنْصَارِيِّ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص فَاطِمَةُ بَهْجَةُ قَلْبِي وَ ابْنَاهَا ثَمَرَةُ فُؤَادِي وَ بَعْلُهَا نُورُ بَصَرِي وَ الْأَئِمَّةُ مِنْ وُلْدِهَا أُمَنَائِي وَ الْحَبْلُ الْمَمْدُودُ فَمَنِ اعْتَصَمَ بِهِمْ فَقَدْ نَجَا وَ مَنْ تَخَلَّفَ عَنْهُمْ فَقَدْ هَوَى.

Kitab Al-Rowza, 'Al-Fazail' of Ibn Shazan - Raising it to the Imam Ja'farasws Bin Mohammed[asws], from his[asws] father[asws], from his[asws] grandfather[asws] Ali[asws] Bin Al-Husayn[asws], from Jabir Al-Ansari who said, 'Rasool-Allah[saww] said: ***'(Syeda) Fatima[asws] is the joy of my[saw] heart, and her[asws] two sons[asws] are the fruits of my[saww] heart, and her[asws] husband is the light of my[saww] eyes, and the Imams[asws] from her[asws] sons[asws] are my[saww] trustees, and the extended rope. So, the one who holds fast with them[asws], so he has attained salvation,***

and one who stays behind from them[asws], so he has collapsed''. *(*Bihar Al Anwaar – V 23, The book of Imamate, P 1 Ch 7 H 95).

Analysis:

Form (textual triggers):

Equivalence can be manifested through the Metaphorical equivalence: (X is Y). There is a non-literal comparison between two distinct entities to be described by stating (or implying) that (X) **is** something else (Y). This creates a worldview in the minds of the readers about two entities to be compared and evaluated. Tenor (x) is the main entity is further described and elucidated by vehicle (Y). In the extract there is no logical direct link between *Fatima[asws]* and *the joy of my[saw] heart.* Metaphorically, it refers to the amount of significance *Seyede Fatima[asws]* has on *the Prophet Mohammed*[saw]. Same thing applies to the rest of other instances shown in the table (X):

Table 5. Metaphorical equivalence of Extract (6)

Tenor (X): entity being described	**Vehicle (Y):** entity describing the tenor
Fatima[asws]	the joy of my[saww] heart
her[asws] two sons[asws]	the fruits of my[saww] heart
her[asws] husband	the light of my[saww] eyes
the Imams[asws] from her[asws] sons[asws]	my[saww] trustees

Moreover, synecdoche is utilized to reflect the part-whole correlation between the tenor and the vehicle. **Ideologically**, such kind of equivalence is meant to stress on the significant position the Household occupy, about which people need to grow awareness. The Household are equated with the emotions and parts of Rasool-Allah[saww] and thus they are identical with his[saww] standards and principles.

Textual opposition in the text shows the selection of Transition (X becomes Y) as well as Parallelism (X becomes Y, X becomes Z). The extract operates opposition in this manner: *The one who holds fast with them[asws], so he (X) has attained (becomes) salvation (Y), and one (X) who stays behind from them[asws](becomes), so he has collapsed (Z)''*

Ideological Implications:

Such opposition highlights the exclusivity of salvation to the Household of Rasool-Allah[saww] as analyzed with more details in extracts (1) and (2).

Extract (7)

99- وَ بِالْإِسْنَادِ يَرْفَعُهُ إِلَى أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ وَ الزُّبَيْرِ بْنِ الْعَوَّامِ أَنَّهُمَا قَالا قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص أَنَا مِيزَانُ الْعِلْمِ وَ عَلِيٌّ كَفَّتَاهُ وَ الْحَسَنُ وَ الْحُسَيْنُ خُيُوطُهُ وَ فَاطِمَةُ عِلَاقَتُهُ وَ الْأَئِمَّةُ مِنْ وُلْدِهِمْ يُنْصَبُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَتُوزَنُ فِيهِ الْأَعْمَالُ مِنَ الْمُحِبِّينَ لَنَا وَ الْمُبْغِضِينَ.

.

And by the chain raising it to Anas Bin Malik (well-known fabricator), and Al Zubeyr Bin Al Awwam, they both said, 'Rasool-Allah[saww] *said:* ***'I[saww] am the scale of knowledge and Ali[asws] is its two palms, and Al-Hassan[asws] and Al-Husayn[asws] are its ropes, and (Syeda) Fatima[asws] is its hanger, and the Imams[asws] from their[asws] sons[asws], He[azwj] will Establish for them[asws] of the Day of Qiyamah and they will be weighing in it the deeds from the ones who love us[asws] and the haters''. (***Bihar Al Anwaar – V 23, The book of Imamate, P 1 Ch 7 H 99).

Analysis:

Form (textual triggers):

Equivalence is textually represented through Metaphorical equivalence utilizing the syntactic trigger (X is Y). Formally speaking the analysis is similar to the one in extract (6). The metaphor equates Rasool-Allah[saww] and his Household (tenor) to the scale of knowledge (the X of Y) (vehicle). Over again, synecdoche is functioned in this extract indexing parts and the whole. The details are demonstrated through table (6).

Ideological Implications:

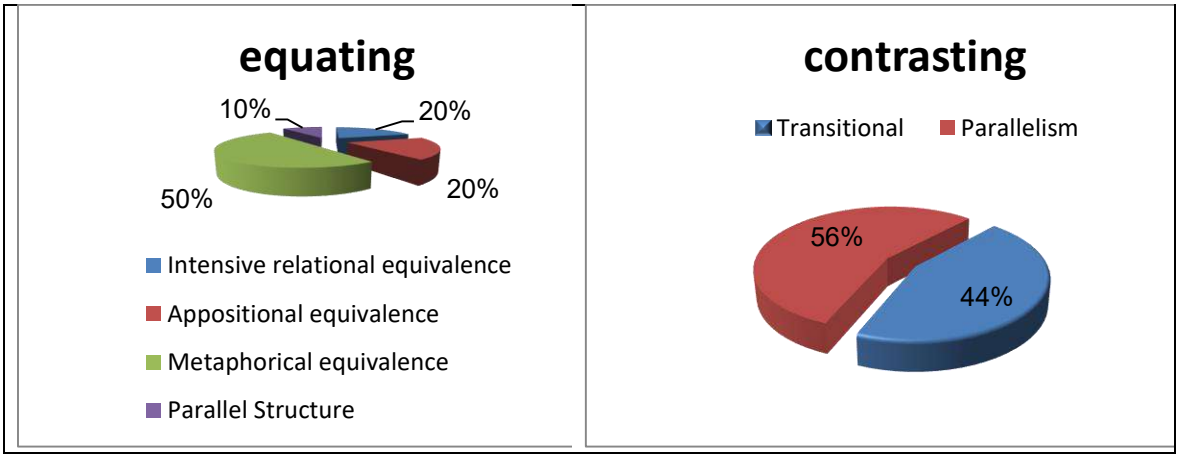
There is reference to the justice and wisdom of the Prophet and his Household. All parts of the scales are equated to one of the household members creating a more precise image of the significant bond among the Prophet and his Household. Such significance reflects the identical value shared among them.

Table 6. Metaphorical Equivalence of Extract (7)

Tenor (X): entity being described	**Vehicle (Y):** entity describing the tenor
Rasool-Allah[saww]	***the scale of knowledge***
Ali[asws]	***its [the scale] two palms***
Al-Hassan[asws] and Al-Husayn[asws]	***its ropes***
(Syeda) Fatima[asws]	***its hanger***

7. Results and Discussions

Figure (1): Equating and contrasting in religious discourse



There are a number of textual triggers for equating and contrasting in the analyzed religious discourse. The variation of utility among textual triggers shown below reflects significant ideological factors as shown in figure (1).

The syntactic triggers utilized for equating are as follows:

- Intensive relational equivalence (X is Y), (X became Y).
- Appositional equivalence (X, Y, (z)…)
- Metaphorical equivalence (X is Y), (the X of Y), (X is like Y)
- Parallel Structure (X is Y. X is Z)

The syntactic triggers utilized for contrasting are as follows:

- Transitional (turn X into Y), (X become Y)
- Parallelism (he is X, she is Y)

Extracts manifest more textual triggers for equating than those of contrasting. This reflects a number of ideological implications. There is a tendency to highlight the equivalence among the Household with the Prophet Mohammed[saww]. Furthermore, the pathway to salvation is shown by representing identical figures to the Prophet Mohammed[saww]. Contrasting, on the other hand, has always been targeted to those who disbelieve and disobey the pathway of the Prophet Mohammed[saww] and his Household.

8. Conclusions

Critical stylistics provides a comprehensive toolkit of analysis by which a more adequate analysis of the texts. This article utilizes equating and contrasting as one textual-conceptual tool of analysis to be employed in religious hadiths from Prophet Mohammed's[saww] tradition.

Equating is utilised to reflect the state in which the Household is made identical and equalized with the Prophet Mohammed[saww]. The ideological implications of equating are textually produced through a number of textual triggers such as: Intensive relational equivalence, Appositional equivalence, Metaphorical equivalence, and Parallel Structure.

Textual triggers of equating such as Intensive relational equivalence; whereas only two textual triggers are spotted in the selected data. Ideologically, equalizing the elements of textual analysis (the Household of the prophet) with means of salvation is depicted.

Contrasting, on the other hand, reveals the exclusivity of salvation to the Household. The worldview created by the text offers the reader with two juxtaposed concepts and beliefs; one leads to salvation while the other leads to destruction. The ideological implications of contrasting in the analysed data are textually produced basically through two textual triggers: Parallelism and Transitional structure.

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Resisting the Standard: Rethinking Tunisia's Arab Identity within a Multilingual Context

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Abstract

The present-day linguistic situation in the Arab world is marked by spatial diversity, evident in diglossia in each member-state. Diglossia, per Charles Ferguson (1959), is the coexistence of two linguistic varieties – belonging to the same language – within the same speech community. These varieties are hierarchically aligned, with the standard being the high variety (H) and the dialect being the low variety (L). Historically, Tunisia has always been multilingual; Berber, Punic, Latin, Arabic, Turkish, Spanish and French have all gained a foothold in the area (Lawson and Sachdev, 2000). Steadfastly since the Arab conquest of North Africa, Modern Standard Arabic has been the H variety used in formal writing. Tunisian Arabic (TA) is the quotidian L variety, used alongside French and English. The linguistic scene is far from stagnant and has, since Ferguson, witnessed the encroachment of TA on Standard domains; a phenomenon described as *leaky diglossia* (Fasold, 1984). This paper argues that multilingual education in Tunisia has further relegated MSA to a quasi-exclusively liturgical domain moving counter to the official discourse of uniformity that champions standardization, manifest particularly in the post-independence drive towards Arab(ic)ization. The empirical data provided by 65 respondents to a questionnaire shows the substitution of MSA by French (L2) and English (L3) in traditionally MSA domains. More significantly, over 40% of respondents strongly believe MSA to be a *different language*, rather than a *standard form* of their "dialect". These findings correlate with a stronger sense of a Tunisian, or a Tunisian *first*, identity where Arabic and Arabness come after. The post-Arab(ic) Tunisian reality, while breaking from a language ideology grounded in a uniform Arab identity, itself centered around the Arabic language, harkens back to a Tunisian identity that is rooted in multiplicity and multilingualism.

***Keywords*:** Diglossia, Standardisation, Modern Standard Arabic, Tunisian Arabic, Identity

1. Introduction

1.1. Preliminaries

The description of the linguistic situation of the Arab world relies a great deal on the foundational paper of Charles Ferguson (1959) "Diglossia". It is, however, noteworthy to mention that he had not been the first researcher to comment on the linguistic duality within the Arab world. In fact, William Marçais (1930), in celebration of the centennial of the French occupation of Algeria, wrote on the phenomenon. Marçais (1930) particularly dubbed it "*a monster with two heads*". Nearly a century after his evaluation, a reconsideration of the attitudes regarding diglossia, as well as the reality of diglossia itself, is due. In Fergusonian terms, "diglossia" is used to describe the sociolinguistic situation where two varieties of the same language co-exist with clearly demarcated "functions". The varieties are H (High) which is the standard language of a given speech community, while the L variety (Low) is the dialect or the colloquial variety.

1.2. Problem Statement

The present research situated itself within the Tunisian speech community, whereby the aforementioned varieties would correspond to Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Tunisian Arabic (TA) respectively. The work of Walters (2003) noted how the nature of diglossia has changed since the publication of Ferguson's work. More than twenty years after Walters' work, the present paper argues that the diglossic situation in Tunisia is the furthest from stagnant and rather evolving by virtue of a multilingual context that is not novel, but rather native to the geographical area.

1.3. Research Hypotheses and Questions

The present paper hypothesized that the dichotomy between the H and L varieties has shifted since Ferguson's time with Modern Standard Arabic occupying a quasi-exclusive liturgical role. This is due to a post-Arab(ic) ideology that rendered the Tunisian speaker's identity Tunisian first, if not only, and then Arab. As such, the following research questions are raised:

a) Has the domain of MSA use shrunk?
b) Is the frequency of MSA usage correlated with a Tunisian sense of identity?
c) How do Tunisians perceive their Tunisian identity within a larger Arab identity?

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Definitional Concerns

Prior to Ferguson's description of Diglossia, William Marçais (1930) provided an appraisal of the diglossic situation particularly from a pedagogical standpoint. Marçais likened the diglossic speech communities to a beast with two heads, a sort of monster that educational programs were unfit to accommodate. Although Marçais' appraisal was deemed colonialist by some, a significant portion of Arabic speakers, and researchers (Badawi, 1973), share his view.

The linguistic situation in the Arab world has interested several linguists (Blau, 1977; Ferguson, 1959; Versteegh, 1997; etc.). In 1959, Ferguson, in his article "Diglossia", introduced the term to describe the linguistic profile of the Arab world. Ferguson (1959) writes that

> [Diglossia is] a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified… superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation (p. 336).

According to Ferguson (1959), the two varieties differ on nine aspects, the most relevant of which to this paper is function. In terms of function, the H and L varieties are said to be in complementary distribution, whereby one variety cannot substitute the other in a given context (e.g. the L variety is reserved for informal use, while the H variety is formal). This allocation of functions is not arbitrary. A point that Ferguson advances is that

> An outsider who learns to speak fluent, accurate L and then uses it in a formal speech is an object of ridicule. A member of the speech community who uses H in a purely conversational situation or in an informal activity like shopping is equally an object of ridicule" (1959, p. 329).

Moreover, Ferguson insists that the H and L varieties are perceived by the community to be members of the *same* language. In fact, he writes that "[s]ometimes the feeling is so strong that H alone is regarded as real and L is reported 'not to exist'" (Ferguson, 1959, pp. 329-330). In the same vein, Fishman notes that if speakers "tend to handle topic x in language X, this may well be because this topic pertains to a *domain* in which that language is 'dominant'" (Fishman, 1965, p. 73). Later work, notably by Joshua Fishman's (1967) and Gumperz (1961, 1964, 1993), on "diglossia" argued that the term can be extended to include not only varieties of one language but also two entirely unrelated languages in a complementary distribution in a given speech community.

Fishman (1967) argues that the very introduction of diglossia allows for the inclusion of languages rather than merely dialects. Fishman explains that diglossia may describe a situation where two or more languages are used within one society (1967). In this case, the distinguishing feature would be that each code serves "functions distinct from those considered appropriate for the other" (Fishman, 1967, p. 29).

As noted in the quote above, the defining factor for Fishman is not whether the two varieties belong to the same language or not, but rather the distribution of functions. This is in contrast to Ferguson's definition, who insists that the H and L varieties are perceived by the community to be members of the same language.

In 1964, Gumperz wrote that "[w]henever several languages or dialects appear regularly as weapons of language choice, they form a behavioral whole, regardless of grammatical distinctness, and must be considered constituent varieties of the same verbal repertoire" (p. 140). In the same article, Gumperz argues that the type of interaction, transactional or personal, is responsible for the selection of one variety over the other. Transactional interactions which tend to be formal prompt the speakers to "suspend their individuality in order to act out the rights and obligations of relevant statuses"; on the other hand, in personal interactions, "participants act as individuals" in typically informal situations (1964, p. 149).

To exemplify his theorizing, Gumperz provided a description of the linguistic situation in Khalapur, north of Delhi, India, and in Hemnesberget, in Northern Norway. In the former situation, there exists two separate languages known by the members of the

community where each code is preserved for a particular situation and to a particular addressee. The division that Gumperz describes is not a simple H and L dichotomy (Hindi and Khalapur, respectively). In fact, the division in Khalapur exists along the lines of religion, caste, and socioeconomic power. These elements are key in defining the choice of variety and, most importantly, are not part of the features mentioned in Ferguson's description of diglossia. On the other hand, in Hemnesberget, the inhabitants use Bokmål "one of the two *officially recognized* [emphasis added] literary languages in Norway (Haugen 1959)" (Gumperz, 1964, p. 149). He adds that "Bokmål is *universally accepted* [emphasis added] throughout Northern Norway, while the other literary language, Nynorsk (formerly Landsmål), is more current in central and western coastal districts" (Gumperz, 1964, p. 149).

From the above-mentioned examples provided by Gumperz, it is fairly clear that Fishman's (1967) extension of diglossia to multilingual communities such as Khalapur and Hemnesberget cannot stand in the Arabic-speaking world. Indeed, a central element to Arabic diglossia is the perception of the members of the speech community that the L variety *does not exist* (Ferguson, 1959). Moreover, the L variety described by Ferguson is not distributed along the lines of caste or wealth; it does not have a literary heritage, nor is it recognized as a standard like Bokmål. Therefore, one cannot call the Khalapur or Hemnesberget communities diglossic, but rather bilingual.

In his paper "Linguistic and Social Interaction in Two Communities" (1964), Gumperz makes reference to Bernstein's observation on the role of social factors in regulating language choice. Bernstein writes that "[b]etween language in the sense defined and speech is social structure. The particular form a social relationship takes acts selectively on what is said" (1964, p. 56). In other words, the linguistic choices that speakers make on a daily basis are hardly neutral and are not independent of culture. In this respect, generalizing the framework of describing diglossia to include any speech community that allocates different functions to different codes would doubtlessly simplify the task. However, such an approach would also disregard peculiar social and cultural structures that cannot be divorced from the study of language. In studying diglossia, one cannot ignore the general perception that the two varieties are *one* language. For this reason, this paper opts for following the "classical" route of studying diglossia as first described by Charles Ferguson (1959).

2.2. The Tunisian Context

In her book *Arabic sociolinguistics: Topics in diglossia, gender, identity, and politics* (2020), Reem Bassiouney cites a passage from an Egyptian novel that aptly describes the diglossic situation in the Arab world:

> When he speaks sincerely his words are in colloquial. A colloquial that was the only variety he knew and used in narration before. But once he starts speaking what they dictate to him, then he speaks in the language of books, and his words become comic! Muhra, Mustafa's ex-wife, in Qismat al-ghuramāʾ ('The debtor's share') by Yūsuf al- Qaʿīd (2004). (2020, p. 10)

Bassiouney comments that this fictional passage may reflect the reality in most Arab countries. She comments that Arabic speakers are perpetually torn between two languages with distinct roles. While they learn poetry in one, they sing in another (Bassiouney, 2020). This duality is present in all Arab countries and Tunisia is no exception. In Tunisia, the official language is Modern Standard Arabic (MSA, or *Al-arabiya*). Yet, Tunisians scarcely use MSA outside of formal contexts. On the other hand, Tunisian Arabic (TA) is the predominant variety used in most contexts. Despite the prevalence of TA, speakers still hold the H variety (MSA) in higher esteem, while the L variety (TA) is perceived as a "corrupted" version. This oscillation between a degraded L variety that dominates most aspects of society and a revered H variety that is seldom used is what Sayahi calls the "diglossia paradox" (2014, p. 3). He elaborates that, in this situation, speakers demean the code that they pass on across generations. This is true for all members of the speech community as "illiterate speakers, …and … educated speakers share a negative perception of the vernacular" (Sayahi, 2014, p. 3).

This paradox may entail a veneration of a variety that speakers find difficult to extemporize in. Sayahi notes that MSA is a marked linguistic choice in a communicative event. For it to not be so, there have to be pre-set conditions "determining the topic and the participants (e.g., a class discussion of a literary work or a radio interview on tourism industry in Tunisia)" (2014, p. 61). Sayahi's conditions may no longer apply in the Tunisian contexts as TA is slowly, but surely, overtaking MSA in these situations. Consequently, Arabic speakers show a "limited degree of comfort…when they use MSA in an unplanned manner" (Sayahi, 2014, p. 61). Moreover, the lack of "predetermined events" where MSA would be unmarked, only "adds to the feeling of *artificiality* [emphasis added] when the occasion arises" (Sayahi, 2014, p. 61). In fact, Procházka (2021) points out that spoken Arabic is held in low prestige in most Arab states, especially academically.

The discomfort in speaking MSA rises from two factors: a) the language is nearly never used in speaking except for very formal contexts that most Tunisians do not go through daily. b) As a consequence of a), the domain of MSA has shrunk to the point where any use of MSA in speech *feels* misplaced. Hence, speaking a particular variety where it ought not be used would, evidently, be breaking the norm.

In more recent years, a noticeable linguistic change has been taking place in Tunisia. Sayahi (2014) observes that Tunisians are on their way to normalize their use of the dialect outside of its traditional domains. In fact, Tunisian Arabic is "gradually spreading to domains that would have been expected to be reserved exclusively for the H variety" (Sayahi, 2014, p. 69). These claims are corroborated by an observation of the increasing use of TA in media, in the religious domain, and in politics. Imams often cite from the Quran then proceed to explain what has been cited in TA. Similarly, politicians and government officials often use TA publicly with an occasional switch to MSA.

This is what Ralph W. Fasold termed "leaky diglossia" which "refers to cases in which one variety 'leaks' into the functions formerly reserved for the other" (1984, p. 41).

He explains that, "if there is substantial leakage of H or L varieties into the functions of the opposite variety, this is usually a sign of the incipient breakdown of the diglossic relationship" (1984, p. 52). In other words, leakage which ranges from a "drip to a torrent" is manifest when a variety expands beyond its linguistic domains and encroaches on those of the other variety (Fasold, 1984, p. 243). Accordingly, it is plausible to claim that the Tunisian linguistic scene is witnessing a case of leaky diglossia in which TA is slowly seeping into the domains of MSA.

3. Methodology

This paper employed a quantitative research methodology using a self-reported online questionnaire to investigate participant'' attitudes and language use patterns. The approach sought to collect information on Tunisian citizens' identity perceptions, domain-specific language use, fluency levels, and demographics. The ethical standards for research involving human subjects were followed in the conduct of this study. Before taking part, each participant gave their informed consent, aware that their answers would be kept private and anonymous.

3.1. Participants

The goals of this research relied on the self-report of participants on their perception of the official language and national dialect, as well as their domains of use of aforementioned codes. The original sample of respondents to the online questionnaire consisted of 69 individuals. Elementary to the validity of the data, respondents who held the Tunisian nationality but were not born to Tunisian parents were excluded. Likewise, respondents who have not received their education from the ages of 5-6 to the age of 18 in Tunisia were also excluded. The latter criterion was motivated by the assumption that all Tunisians receive a formal education in MSA during that timespan, while studying abroad may not always guarantee education in MSA. Applying these criteria excluded 4 respondents, making the total number of valid responses 65, between the ages of 19 and 40. The respondents consisted of 13 males (20%) and 52 females (80%). All of the respondents were native speakers of Tunisian Arabic and were Tunisian nationals as were their parents. Only 62 (92.3%) of the respondents have received/are receiving a higher education in Tunisia.

3.2. Methods

The materials for this study were an online questionnaire written in standard Arabic. The 35-item questionnaire consisted of eight sections. The first one collected the demographic data of the participants, specifically their age, gender, their and their parents' nationality, level of education, and their academic field of specialty. The second section asked respondents to report their level of fluency in Tunisian Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic, French, English and another language on a 5-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree). The third section asked respondents to report the domains of using Modern Standard Arabic. The domains were labeled: *none, home, work, school, street, place of worship*. It also asked respondents to report on the interlocutors with whom they use MSA. The interlocutors were labeled as: *no one, parents,*

siblings, children, spouse, peers, superiors, students/employees. The categorisation of interlocutors in this manner aimed at measuring the use of the variety in relation to social distance/proximity. The fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh section covered the same points with regard to Tunisian Arabic, French, English, and another language respectively. The eighth section asked respondents to report on their perception of the relationship between Tunisian Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic. The options were itemised as (1= *one language,* 2= *a language (MSA) and a dialect (TA),* 3= *two separate yet connected languages*). Additionally, respondents were asked to report on a 5-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree) whether they believed Tunisian Arabic or Modern Standard Arabic ought to be the only/official language used. Respondents were equally asked to report on their preferred language of use (*Modern Standard Arabic, Tunisian Arabic, French, English, another language)*. Finally, the questionnaire requested respondents to label themselves in terms of identity. The options included: *Tunisian, Arab, Tunisian and Arab, Arab and Tunisian,* and *other.*

3.3. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used in the analysis of the online questionnaire data to compile demographic data, language proficiency levels, and usage trends. To investigate possible connections between language use patterns, demographic factors, and language perceptions, correlation tests were performed using SPSS software. Trends in language choice and identity labeling were found using frequency distributions.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

The above-mentioned questionnaire yielded significant results which will be elaborated in the present section. In relation to self-reported levels of fluency, the average score for Tunisian Arabic was 4.84 while the score for Modern Standard Arabic was 4.16. The score for French fluency was relatively low in comparison, averaging 2.95. In contrast, the average fluency score for English was 4.24 which is higher than that of Modern Standard Arabic.

With regard to the domains of language use, 43.1% of respondents answered that they do not use MSA altogether, while only 38.5% of respondents said that they use it in formal domains. Meanwhile 10.8% of respondents reported using Modern Standard Arabic in both formal and informal domains. In sharp contrast, 72.3% of respondents reported using Tunisian Arabic in both formal and informal domains, including places of worship. Moreover, respondents have reported using French and English more than Modern Standard Arabic in formal domains (40% and 44.6% respectively). Similarly, both French (24.6%) and English (47.7%) were reported to be used more often in both formal and informal domains. A summary of these results is presented in table 1.

Table 1

Domains of language use

	Formal	Informal	Both	Not used
MSA	38.5%	7.7%	10.8%	43.1%
TA	3.1%	21.5%	72.3%	3.1%
French	40%	6.2%	24.6%	29.2%
English	44.6%	4.6%	47.7%	3.1%

As shown in table 2, the respondents have also provided a report of the interlocutors with whom each language was used. The results reiterated the findings in relation to domain of use. In fact, Tunisian Arabic was the language that was used with all the interlocutors, regardless of social proximity/distance. French followed TA when addressing superiors (24.6%), followed closely by English (23.1%). As for addressing peers, English followed TA with 56.9%, followed by French (30.8%). Modern Standard Arabic was the language least used with 58.5% of respondents reporting not using the language with anyone.

Table 2

Interlocutors with whom participants use the different languages

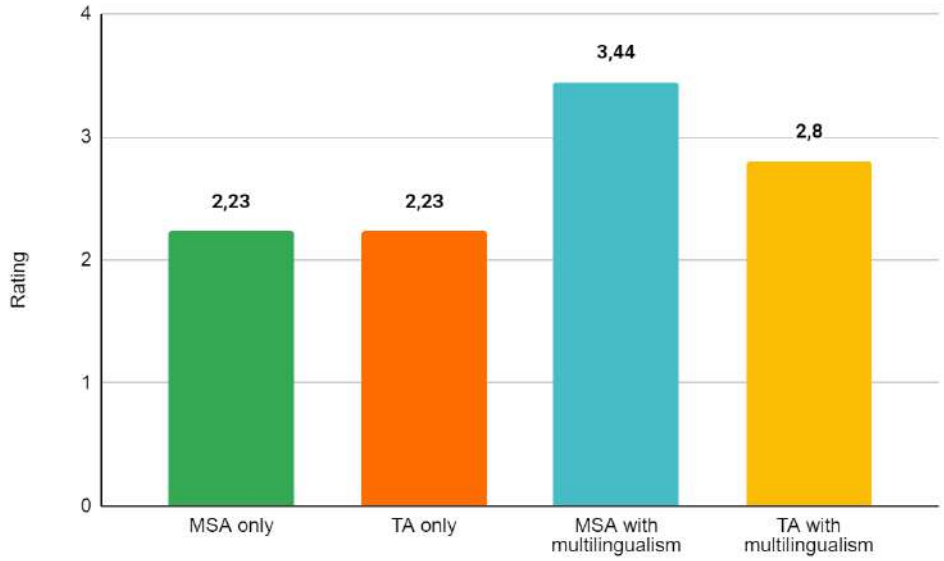
	No one	Parents	Siblings	Children	Spouse	Peers	Superiors	Students/ Employees
MSA	58.5%	7.7%	7.7%	21.5%	1.5%	7.7%	9.2%	29.2%
TA	6.2%	93.8%	90.8%	83.1%	26.2%	83.1%	46.2%	72.3%
French	32.%	16.9%	16.9%	10.8%	6.2%	30.8%	24.6%	46.2%
English	6.2%	16.9%	44.6%	12.3%	3.1%	56.9%	23.1%	73.8%

With regards to the respondents' perception of the relationship binding Tunisian Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic, no one deemed the two codes to be one language. However, the opinions of respondents were closely split with 58.5% considering Modern Standard Arabic to be a language while Tunisian Arabic is the local dialect. On the other hand, a significant number of respondents (41.5%) considered the two codes to be two separate languages.

Additionally, the questionnaire included a gauge of respondents' preferred linguistic situation in Tunisia. The lowest scores were assigned to cases of monolingualism, where Modern Standard Arabic was the sole language of communication in both formal and informal domains (m= 2.23). This result was the same for a Tunisian Arabic case of monolingualism (m= 2.23). The respondents showed a preference for multilingualism where Modern Standard Arabic is the official language (m= 3.44), followed by a preferred case of multilingualism where Tunisian Arabic would be the official language (m= 2.8). These scores are illustrated in figure 1.

Figure 1

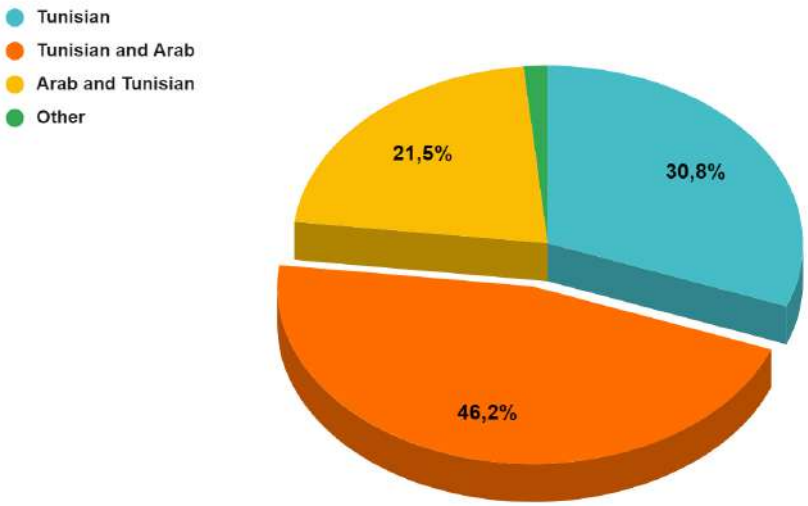
Rating of the preferred official language in Tunisia



These findings were paradoxical to the respondents' preferred language of communication. In fact, 49.2% chose Tunisian Arabic as their preferred means of communication. The second rank was occupied by English as 53.8% of respondents selected it as the second preferred means of communication. The paradox deepened when respondents were asked to identify themselves. 46.2% identified themselves as Tunisian *and* Arab, while 30.8% identified themselves as Tunisian only. It is important to mention that none of the respondents selected the "Arab only" category. These findings are illustrated in figure 2.

Figure 2

Descriptive graphic of respondents' self-reported identification



A Pearson correlation test was conducted to gauge any relationship between the respondents' perception of the relationship between Tunisian Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic and their pattern of identification. The test yielded a significant negative correlation at the 0.05 level (r= -0,26) revealing that respondents who identified as Tunisian only were more likely to consider Modern Standard Arabic and Tunisian Arabic to be two separate languages.

Table 3

Correlation between respondents' self-reported identity and their perception of the relationship between MSA and TA

Correlations

		Respondent Identity	Perception of MSA and TA
Respondent Identity	Pearson Correlation	1	-,267*
	Sig. (1-tailed)		,016
	N	65	65
Perception of MSA and TA	Pearson Correlation	-,267*	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	,016	
	N	65	65

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

4.2. Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that the diglossic situation described by Ferguson in 1959 has changed to a significant degree. In fact, the dichotomy dividing the use of the H variety in formal domains while the L variety was exclusive to informal domains seems to no longer stand. Indeed, respondents have reported a greater use of Tunisian Arabic in both formal and informal domains while Modern Standard Arabic remains predominantly unused regardless of domains and interlocutors. These findings provide a direct answer to the first research question, proving that the domain of MSA has indeed shrunk over the years since Ferguson's paper.

Moreover, the findings go against the post-independence drive towards Arabicization that sought to eradicate the linguistic colonization of the French language. The efforts deployed by the post-independence government, spearheaded by Bourguiba, were to guard the Tunisian identity rather than efface it in exchange for an Arab one (Bassiouney, 2020). Indeed, Bourguiba has often championed "the Tunisian personality" in his public speeches, a unique defining characteristic of the inhabitants of Tunisia. Versteegh (1997) remarks that the Arab conquest of North Africa, between the seventh and eleventh centuries A.D., was likely met with a multilingual community where natives spoke more than one language. Indeed, archeological evidence testifies to the persistence of a Latin in the south of modern-day Tunisia during the time of the Islamic conquests (Versteegh, 1997). It is arguable then, per the second research question, that infrequent use of MSA is a token of a stronger sense of a Tunisian identity rather than an Arab one. This identity, as is historically shown, is rooted in multilingualism.

The findings further confirm the theorizing of Fasold regarding leaky diglossia, as well as the concept advanced by Sayahi, i.e. diglossia paradox. As the domains of Modern Standard Arabic shrink, the domains of Tunisian Arabic expand significantly and are followed by two foreign languages (French and English). The Tunisian curriculum introduces Tunisian students to foreign languages at a young age (between 7 and 8). These two foreign languages are an obligatory part of the students' academic foundation. Moreover, Tunisian high school students have the possibility of learning a third optional foreign language to their inventory. It is not strange for the dedicated Tunisian student to graduate with notable competence in both French, English, as well as an additional language. This is manifest in the respondents' preference for multilingualism in general, a part and parcel of the Tunisian identity itself.

Paradoxically, while the respondents have argued in favor of Modern Standard Arabic as the official language of the country, they have revealed reduced fluency in it, lack of use, as well as lack of preference in use. This is the core of Sayahi's argument (2014) in which he describes how the speakers of the L variety often denigrate their mother tongue (Tunsian Arabic) in favor of a universally accepted standard. One of the remarks made by Sayahi is the prevalence of this paradoxical attitude regardless of the level of education of people. This has been proven by the present study as no significant correlation has been found between the level of education of respondents and their preference for Modern Standard Arabic as the official language.

Nevertheless, these findings correlate with a stronger sense of a Tunisian, or a Tunisian *first*, identity where Arabic and Arabness come at a second level. The post-Arab(ic) Tunisian reality, a product of disillusionment with pan-Arab ideology, championed a more localized sense of identity. To answer the third research question raised by this paper, Tunisian identity itself, though grounded in a muslim and Arabic-speaking center, remains a plural and historical vessel testifying to the geographical history of multiplicity and diversity. One of the relics of this multiplicity is the Tunisian Arabic's rich vocabulary, laden with "foreign" elements, and the Tunisian's affinity for multilingualism.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Limitations

The findings reported herein should be considered in the light of some limitations which are limited resources, a small sample size, and individual differences. To begin with, the results of the reported experiment have the potential for refinement provided that analysis be conducted using appropriate software. Second, the study reported on findings from a sample of 65 individuals. The sample size remains relatively small in comparison to the general population of Tunisians. Lastly, individual differences must be considered in the interpretation of the results. In fact, Tunisians differ in their attitudes towards TA and MSA. Their perception of the dialect and of the standard may vary in accordance with several factors such as upbringing, field of study, age, etc. Further exploration in this area could use multivariate analysis to shed light on variables that may affect participants' language attitudes and ideologies.

5.2. Significance and Future Research

In conclusion, the linguistic situation of Tunisia, though still diglossic with a H (High) and L (Low) varieties, is not identical to the one described by either Ferguson (1959) nor Walters (2003). The present research has shown that the domain of Modern Standard Arabic has shrunk to a significant degree, while the domains of Tunisian Arabic have expanded. Nevertheless, respondents have shown a keen attachment to the standard as the official language, albeit with multilingualism, which testifies to a persistent diglossia paradox. Moreover, these findings have revealed the dynamic nature of diglossia, unlike Ferguson's qualification of it as a relatively stable situation. More importantly, the historical identity of Tunisia as a multilingual and multiethnic hub may testify to the Tunisian preference for maintaining such a sense of plurality that is not a fragmentation of the identity but rather a mosaic rendition of it.

Future research is encouraged to expand the participant pool and incorporate qualitative methods to gain deeper insights into language attitudes and usage patterns. Additionally, the implications of this study for language policy highlight the need to consider both the practical use and emotional significance of language in multilingual contexts. More specifically, a reform in teaching Arabic in diglossic communities is needed.

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Evaluating Google Machine Translation in Translating Arabic News Articles Headlines into English

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Abstract

This study evaluates the performance of Google Translate (GT) in translating Arabic news headlines into English, focusing on clarity, accuracy, and stylistic quality. Headlines were collected from reputable news agencies, including Al Jazeera, BBC, Oman Daily Observer, Al Watan, and Al Arabiya. Ten headlines were translated using GT and compared with human translations, which were then evaluated by eight professional translators through a structured grid-based survey. Results indicate that GT performed well in clarity (95%) and accuracy (93.7%) but scored lower in style (90.6%). While GT demonstrates remarkable progress in machine translation, the findings highlight its limitations in maintaining stylistic nuances in complex linguistic contexts such as media translation. This underscores the importance of human oversight and the potential for hybrid approaches combining machine and human translation for optimal results.

***Keywords*:** Machine Translation, Google Translate, Arabic-English Translation, News Headlines, Linguistic Style

1. Introduction

Globalization, which is resembled by the world wide web, social media, and international news, has demanded language barriers broken by quick translation production of machine translation (MT). According to Hutchins (1986, p: 15 as cited in Kadhim et al., 2013), machine translation is an application of computers, to translate one natural language into another. Machine translation has been known in the past decades as a computational linguistic phenomenon because of the rapid growth of technology and information that hasn't left any scientific and linguistics field without its intervention. The existence of MT and its swift development made it a worthwhile subject for researchers, commercial developers, and users.

1.1. Problem Statement

The massive use of machine translation especially Google Translate, which has been proven to be the most powerful and accurate of the readily available machine translation tool due to its reliance on a huge database compared to other machine translation systems, led to the belief that Google Translate has a high rate of accuracy exceeding other machine translation because of its constant upload of documents worldwide and with the function of users input in "suggest an edit" the improvement of the accuracy of Google translate continues according to (Tongpoon-Patanasorn & Griffith, 2020), this triggered the curiosity towards News headlines and the performance of Google Translate taking into consideration that headlines are complicated and special in terms of grammar and style. In addition, the Arabic language is known for its rich morphological and different word order, further complicating the translation process (Alqudsi et al., 2014). This raises concerns about the tool's performance in such contexts. In this research, I will evaluate Google Machine Translation

in translating Arabic news headlines into English, this research aims to contribute to the body of literature on machine translation and Arabic language processing, while also providing insights into the limitations and potential improvements for such translation tools.

1. Research Objectives

To examine the quality of Google Machine Translation in translating Arabic news article headlines into English.

2. Research Questions

How is the quality of Google Machine Translation in translating Arabic News article headlines into English?

1.2. Theoretical Framework

As I am assessing the quality of Google Machine Translation, in this research, the raw outputs of Machine Translation are going to be assessed and evaluated based on the criteria of Hutchins and Somers (1992).

Hutchins and Somers (1992) criteria focus on the translated text's intelligibility, fidelity, and style. According to them, these criteria are the most obvious translation quality test.

Hutchins and Somers defined each criterion (1992: 163), as follows:

Intelligibility, referred to as clarity, reflects the reader's understanding of the text, which means that the translated text is coherent. According to Arnold et al (1994: 169, as cited in Fiederer & O'Brien, 2009) grammatical errors, untranslated words, and mistranslated words affect intelligibility, considered the traditional way of assessing the translation quality. Fidelity, or the equivalent accuracy, means the approximate transference of the intended meaning and information of the source text into the target translated text, on other words is the preservation of the source language meaning in the translated text (ibid 1994: 171, as cited in Fiederer & O'Brien, 2009). Arnold et al (1994: 169, as cited in Fiederer & O'Brien, 2009), declared that intelligibility and fidelity correlate; the higher the intelligibility the higher the fidelity. The intelligibility and fidelity are the most important metrics of machine translation evaluation by humans as pointed out by Roturier (2006: 83). As for style, Hutchins and Somers (1992: 163), defined it as the fluence use of the language in the translation texts for its relatively appropriate content and intention. T.C Halliday, in Van Slype's 1979, as cited in Dabbadie et al 2002: 14, proposed a 4-point scale for the intelligibility measurement. To Halliday, comprehensibility and intelligibility are synonyms. Style is rarely found in the evaluation of machine translation quality assessment, as it is considered a major factor in rating a human translation, however, Hutchins and Somers (1992: 173), disagreed by highlighting that translators' instinct is to assess MT translation to the quality predicted by a human translation, therefore stylistic qualities are as important as the other two criteria. The use of Hutchins and Somers (1992) criteria in this research because it is considered a basic principle of machine translation evaluation as the researcher focuses on the quality of the Google Translate translation of Arabic headlines into English

with the comparison to human translation of the same headline. This criterion is easier for evaluators to judge the quality as it precise and basic metric.

2. Literature Review

The high translation quality produced by machine translation is due to the rapid growth in information and technology. Increased on the other hand the users' demand of using machine translation. This draws the researchers' attention to the quality evaluation of the machine translation production. The evolution and advancement of machine translation pave the way for an in-depth understanding of employing a computer to perform an automated translation. The literature review highlights the development of Google Translate over the years, and the translation quality production enhancements made it the focus of this study. With the development of machine translation outcome quality, the quality assessment approaches changed by researchers evaluating machine translation outcomes.

2.1. Evolution and Advancements in Machine Translation

In 1950, the technology of machine translation existed. The idea of employing a digital computer to perform an automated translation was first discussed in 1955 as cited in Prates et al., 2020. Since 1950, automated translation received the researchers' attention in computational linguistic research. (Prates et al., 2020). Hovy et al. (2002) pointed out that Machine Translation is a worthwhile subject for researchers, software developers, and users. According to Hutchins and Somers (1992, p. 3), machine translation is a computerised system that produces translation from one language into another with or without human assistance.

Prates et al (2020), highlighted that the utilization of Machine Translation (MT) branded the thought to the majority that automated translation output quality is equal to human translation production. It is a justifiable thought as machine translation over the past years has not been seen as an aid but rather a replacement for human translation, therefore, a massive increase in research studying the quality of machine translation was focused on tackling the shortage and errors made by the MT. Much of the research helped overcome the MT shortage, which was mostly beneficial to the software developers and resulted in the development of MT software.

Ghasemi & Hashemian, (2016) identified that machine translation software and applications are in rapid and continuous growth, different types of machine translation were subject to assessment as determined by Ghasemi & Hashemian, (2016). Such as statistical, rule-based, and recent development of machine translation is neural machine translation.

2.2. Google Translate and MT Software

It has been shared that Google Translate machine translation is one of the largest, free and available existing translation tools for over 200 million users daily (Shankland, 2017, as cited in Prates et al., 2020), Which makes it the most reliable and trusted website for the process of translation and makes it a better machine translation for this research. Its establishment owed to a mistranslated email by a licensed program company software

Google used in 2004, which caused the frustration of Sergey Brin, co-founder of Google Translate, Le et al., (2016) highlighted. Google Translate was launched two years later using phrase-based machine translation software, breaking the input phrases and translating sentences and phrases separately. In 2014, Google started using Statistical Machine Translation, which is based on looking for the best translation pattern of human translation stored in the model, depending on bilingual text corpora. In the same year, Yamada (2019), conducted a study on the Google Translate statistical model, where he studied the post-edit performance of college language learners. This research hypothesized that using the statistical model would reduce the level of post-editing effort of nonprofessional translators, yet the results of the research reflected that the use of students' post-edit effort didn't match the professional standards. The researcher explained the result due to the limitation of the statistical model at that time. Since 2014, Google Translate made an initiative called the Community Initiative, where Google received inputs and comments on translation for its users to uplift the production of translation produced by Google Translate to be double-checked for quality assurance. (Kelman, 2014 as cited in Prates et al., 2020).

In September 2016, the Google team announced the new software model that Google is presently using, neural machine translation, which came to address traditional statistical machine shortcomings. The neural machine translation is considered a subsect of AI which empowers its strength in the ability of the machine to learn directly by the end-to-end process, in which the input text is mapped to output text association (Kisilu et al., 2024). It also effectively copes with long inputs due to attention mechanisms accompanied with. Add to the strength of neural machine translation is that it avoids choosing the brittle design of traditional machine translation. Wu et al. (2016) conducted research that studied the quality of NMT in comparison with SMT Google Translate used. The result of the research showed that the translation errors were reduced to 60% compared to statistical machine translation. The result of this study is expected due to the dependence of SMT on bilingual text corpora that limits the translation process of the software while NMT is a learning software that adapts to the users' input and provides better translations.

However, three inherent weaknesses of NMT affect its accuracy, the ineffectiveness in dealing with seldom used words, training, and interference slower, and the untranslated words in the source text. (Wu et al., 2016).

Kisilu et al. (2024) studied the accuracy of Google Translate when translating English-Kiswahili and Kiswahili-English Newspaper Headlines. The study used 50 random headlines retrieved from two different news agencies. The headlines were translated by Google Translate and human translators. The translations of both Google Translate and Human Translate were compared using the qualitative and quantitative research methodology. The result revealed that human translation is more accurate than Google translation although some human translations were similar to the production of Google Translate. Google was able to translate 56% of the 50 headlines accurately.

2.3. Machine Translation Assessment

Machine translation software changed over the years as well as the researchers' approaches, it started with word-by-word analysis, as a direct approach. And advanced to statistical and rule-based approaches. (Kadhim et al., 2013) The evaluation of machine translation in the early years demands the involvement of a human evaluator in the process. Most researchers are interested in studying machine translation output instead of post-editing it. However, human evaluation has its disadvantages, for its subjectivity, cost, and time-consuming, which led to the development of automated evaluation metrics. (Federer & O'Brien, 2009).

Hutchins and Somers (1992: 163), suggested the most obvious tests evaluating machine translation, which are intelligibility, fidelity, and style. Arnold et al (1994 as cited in Fiederer & O'Brien, 2009) commented that intelligibility is a traditional way of assessing quality because it reflects user quality judgment, the more the user understands the higher the score is. He claims intelligibility correlates with accuracy. Slype's Study (1979 as cited in Fiederer & O'Brien, 2009), evaluated the quality of machine translation for the European Commission, T.C Halliday proposed intelligibility as a measurement for the quality evaluation on a 4-point scale. To Dabbadie et al (2002 as cited in Fiederer & O'Brien, 2009) intelligibility is the most important measurement in evaluating the MT quality. Roturie, (2006) agreed by pointing out that intelligibility and fidelity are the most frequent metric in the human evaluation of MT. There is a notable shortage of scholarly literature addressing the quality of machine translation specifically for Arabic-English language pairs. Despite the growing interest in natural language processing and translation technologies, the evaluation of machine translation systems in the context of these languages remains underexplored, highlighting a significant research gap.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Sample

The sample used in this research is news headlines collected from famous news agencies such as Al Jazeera Arabic-English, BBC Arabic- English, Oman Daily Observer, Al Watan, and Al Arabia Arabic-English. The headlines collected are from Arabic language source texts. The Arabic language was chosen to be the source text for its unique features as a language and for the intended purpose of the researcher's subjective language for the MT experiment as it is known for its complex morphology. It is also to assess Google Machine Translation performance in the language. For an Arabic headline to be chosen, the researcher made it necessary to have a human translation of the same headline. Therefore, ten headlines were chosen for this study. The selection of ten Arabic headlines was purposefully made to align with the study's objectives, ensuring they provide a focused yet diverse representation of linguistic and thematic features relevant to Arabic news reporting. These headlines were chosen for their richness in linguistic elements, cultural references, and relevance to the research topic, offering depth and breadth in analysis. While limited in number, they are sufficient to achieve data saturation, where recurring patterns and insights emerge without requiring additional data. Headlines, though brief, are dense with linguistic and cultural nuances, making this manageable sample size appropriate for detailed qualitative within the

study's scope and practical constraints. Additionally, this selection serves as a foundational step, offering preliminary insights that can guide broader studies with larger datasets.

3.2. Instrument

The instrument used to collect the data is a web-based survey, Google Forms. Google Forms was chosen because of its friendly user base, which easily obtains the users' responses. It could be disseminated and answered by individuals anywhere and anytime, it is very accessible and doesn't need special software to operate. Google Forms provides different options for how to design your survey, for example, you can design the response as a multiple-choice question, scale, check boxes, text, grid, and others. In this research, the grid option will be sufficient for the desired goal.

3.3. Data Collection

There are two main collections of data. The first collection consists of Arabic news headlines. These headlines were gathered from Arabic news agencies, which are either based in Arabic-speaking countries or have dedicated Arabic pages. Finding accurate human translations for the headlines within the same agency was challenging, especially for political headlines. Each agency often uses different headlines in English compared to their Arabic versions. news. Each agency with its two different pages was targeting the audience of each language separately most of the time. It is only the political topics that have quoted headlines from the speaker that are preserved the same in shape and purpose. However, some translations of the Arabic headlines of one news agency were found on other engines' pages with the same structure and purpose some agencies share the same headlines in both languages on the same topic.

The other collection of the data was through survey dissemination to professional translators, who practice translation as a job in newspapers agencies in Oman. The survey was sent through email with general instructions to guide them in answering the survey. I utilized the same survey questions as those employed in the research by Kadhim et al. (2013), these questions were designed based on the assessment criteria outlined by Hutchins and Somers (1992), ensuring consistency and alignment with established evaluation frameworks.

3.4. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed based on the criteria of Hutchins and Somers (1992): intelligibility, fidelity, and style, which are considered the basic principles when evaluating the quality of machine translation. in this study, evaluators are translators of English newspaper agencies in Oman. Therefore, this criterion is best suited for this study to evaluate only headlines. For this study and to make sure that evaluators are more familiar with the terms used in evaluating, I have used the synonyms of those criteria. For intelligibility, clarity is equivalent, for fidelity, the term accuracy is a synonym, yet style remains the same because, as I assume is a well-known term for evaluators. In the survey, the evaluators were guided by questions for each criterion which they needed to answer on a scale of 1-4. The evaluators were asked to assess the clarity of the MT output of a headline in comparison with an HT of

the same title. They were asked the following question: how easily can you understand Google Machine Translation in comparison to the human version of the same title?
Second, in the order of assessment comes accuracy. A translation can be understood but doesn't mean it reflects the intended meaning. On a scale of 1-4, the evaluators were asked to answer the following question, to what extent the information of the source headline contains the same information in the target headline in comparison with the human translation version of the same title?

Hutchins and Somers (1992) justify the use of style as a criterion in assessing machine translation by giving the aim of this research to assess machine translation in comparison to human translation. The evaluators were asked on a scale of 1-4 to answer, does Google Machine Translation sound natural and idiomatic in comparison to the human translation of the same source headline?

On a scale of 1-4, for clarity one implies that the translation is not understandable, two means that the translation is partially understanding of the translation, three means that the translation is mostly understandable, and four means that the translation is fully understandable. The same scores resemble the same tendency of the criteria studied based on the question.

The researcher assumes that GMT would score a high clarity, accuracy, and style ratio considering Google Translate's recent advanced performance.

4. Results & Discussion

Clarity, accuracy, and style are the three main criteria the current study focused on assessing the quality of the GMT in comparison with the HT of the randomly chosen Arabic headlines. The questionnaire was disseminated to 8 translators who were asked to evaluate each headline based on the three criteria on a scale of 1-4. Taking into account that the most active newspaper agencies are only two of the number of participants who are specialists in the field and work in English newspaper agencies in Oman.

The data received were transformed into Microsoft Excel to calculate the average of each parameter of the 10 headlines, and to extract charts.

The total average of each criterion was calculated manually following the formula:	The percentage of the total average of each criterion is calculated based on the formula:
$Totle\ Av = \frac{Av1 + Av2 + Av3 + Av4 + \cdots + Av10}{n}$ Av_x= average score of each evaluator of the same criterion n= number of evaluators Av= total average	$Percentage = \frac{Av \times 100}{4}$

The first criterion chosen to be evaluated from the first sight is clarity, the evaluators were asked to evaluate on a scale of 1-4, how easily can you understand GMT translation in comparison to human translation of the same headline?

On a scale of 1-4, 1 referred to not understandable, 2 referred to partially understandable, 3 referred to mostly understandable, and 4 referred to fully understandable.

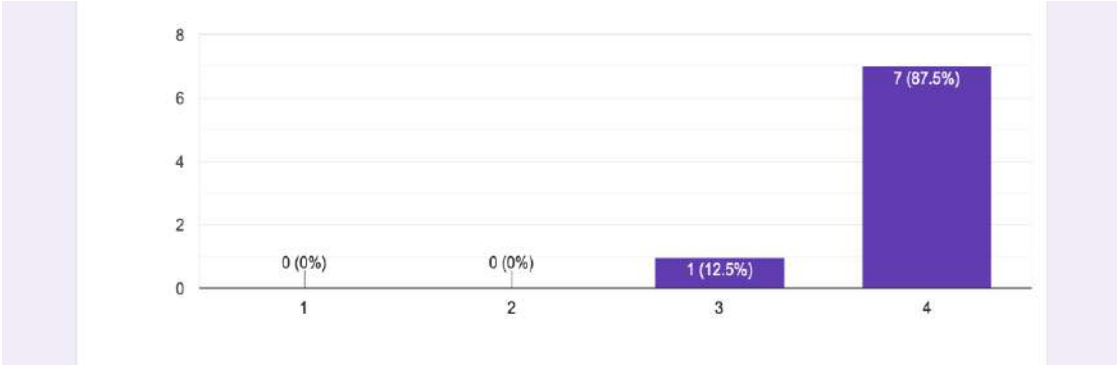

Figure 1 Clarity Evaluation of a headline

The following chart resembles every human judgment of each headline.

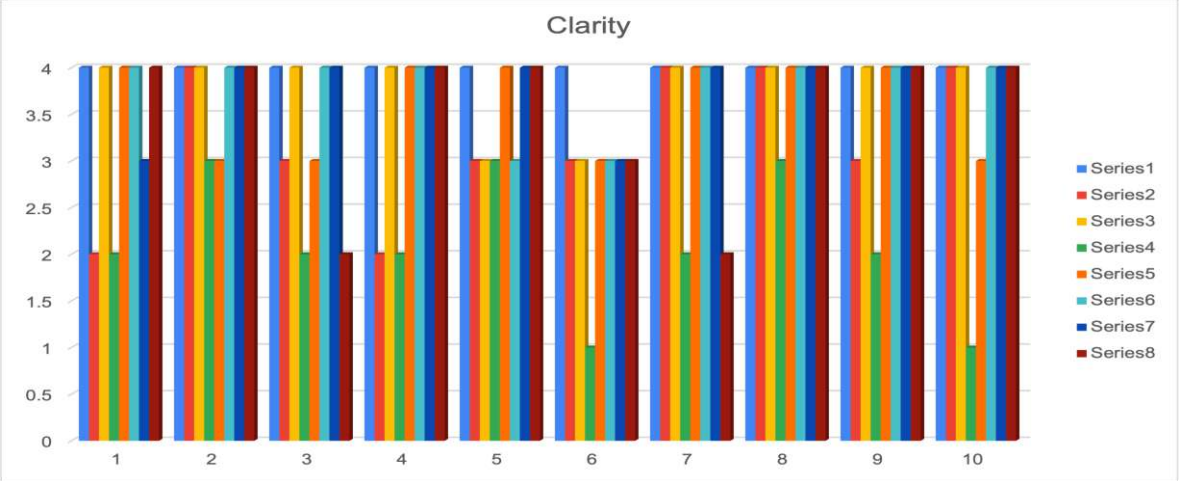

Figure 2 Clarity Evaluation Chart

In this chart, the series resembles the eight evaluators, while the X axis reflects the headlines which are 10 headlines in this study. The Y axis resembles the scale outputs 1 to 4. The chart shows that headline 8 scored the highest score, by the 8 evaluators. It also shows that evaluator four evaluated the GMT in comparison with human translation with the lowest scores in comparison with other evaluators. In headline 10 s/he evaluated the headlines 10 and 6 clarity with a score of one which reflects the translation was not understandable.

	Headline 10	Headline 6
Source	السعودية وإيران تبدآن ترتيبات إعادة فتح السفارات والقنصليات	لماذا كل هذا الغضب؟
GMT	Saudi Arabia and Iran begin arrangements to reopen embassies and consulates	why all this anger?
HT	Saudi Arabia and Iran agree to reopen embassies	What are people so angry about?

The fourth evaluator only evaluated three headlines translated by Google Translate as mostly understandable out of the ten headlines. However, headline eight scored the highest score. It scored 4 by 87.5% of the evaluators and 12.5% chose 3.

source	ماذا جرى لبولندا؟
GMT	What happened to Poland?
HT	What Happened to Poland?

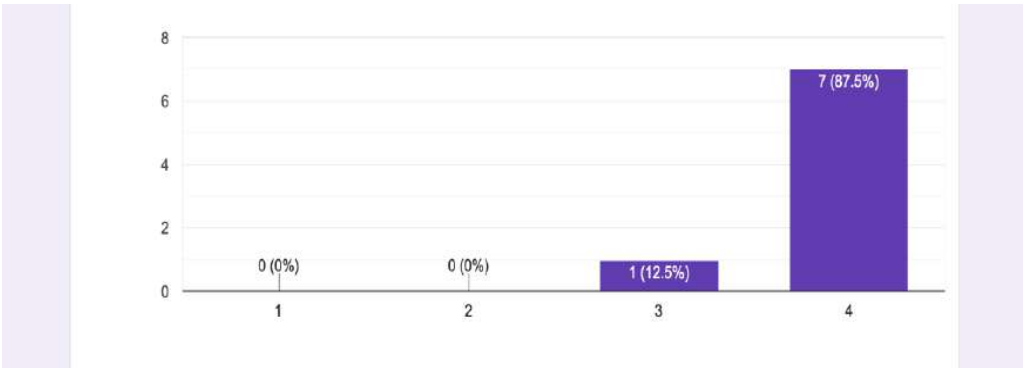

Figure 3 Headline Eight Score

Accuracy comes second in evaluation, the evaluators were asked, to what extent the information of the source headline contains the same information in the GMT target headline in comparison with the human translation. On a scale of 1-4, 1 resembled not the same information, and 4 resembled the same information. The following chart displays the evaluators' judgments of the same 10 headlines.

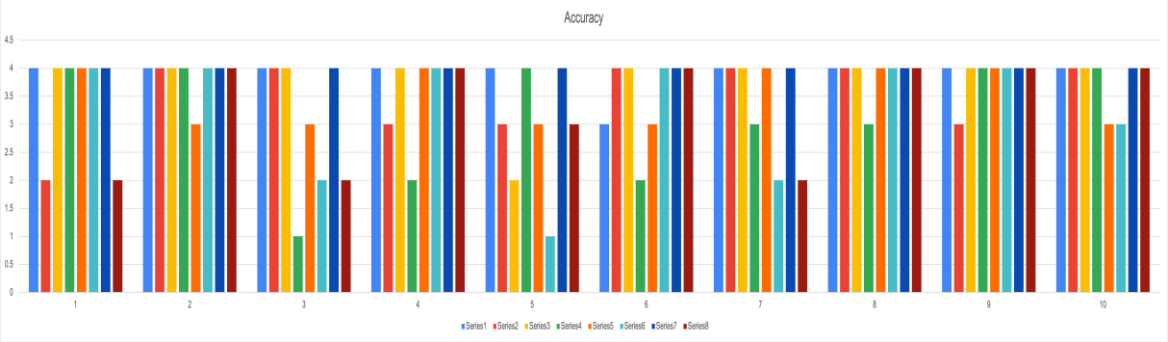

Figure 4 Accuracy Evaluation Chart

The headline with the highest score in clarity showed the highest score in accuracy which are headlines 8, 9, and 2. However, the evaluator who chose the lowest scores in clarity for headlines 10 and 6, chose a high score for accuracy for the same headlines which reflect a contradiction in the assessment of the quality of GMT translation.

The third criterion in evaluation is style. The evaluators were asked to score the translation style by answering the question, does Google Machine Translation sound natural and idiomatic compared to the human translation of the same source headline? On a scale of 1-4, 1 refers to the inappropriateness of the language, and 4 refers to the appropriateness of the language. The following chart highlights the human judgment of the translated headlines by GMT fluency and idiomatic.

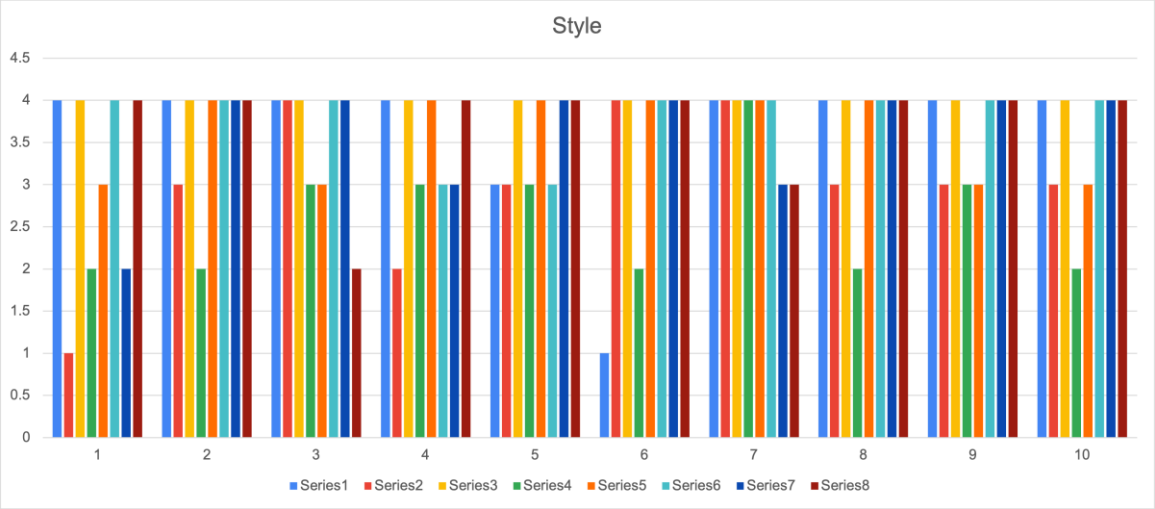

Figure 4 Style Evaluation Chart

The chart shows that headlines 7,5, and 3 score the highest score in language appropriateness. This concludes that style doesn't correlate with the accuracy and clarity of the headline translation.

	Headline 5	Headline 7	Headline 3
Source	إلى أين تتجه الاحتجاجات وهل يرضخ نتنياهو؟	اشتباكات لليلة الثانية بين الشرطة الإسرائيلية وعشرات المصلين المتحصنين داخله	محادثات رفيعة المستوي بين البلدين لأول مرة منذ سبع سنوات برعاية صينية
GMT	Where are the protests heading? Will Netanyahu acquiesce?	Clashes for the second night between the Israeli police and dozens of worshipers holed up inside.	High-level talks between the two countries for the first time in seven years under Chinese sponsorship
HT	Why is there a crisis? Will the government back down?	Israeli police storm al-Aqsa mosque for the second time on Wednesday.	Rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia hold first high-level talks in seven years.

Calculating the total average of each criterion following the mentioned formula previously. The total average of clarity is:

$$Clarity\ totle\ Av = \frac{31}{8} = 3.8$$

The total average accuracy is:

$$Accuracy\ totle\ Av = \frac{30}{8} = 3.7$$

The Totle average of style is:

$$Style\ totle\ Av = \frac{29}{8} = 3.6$$

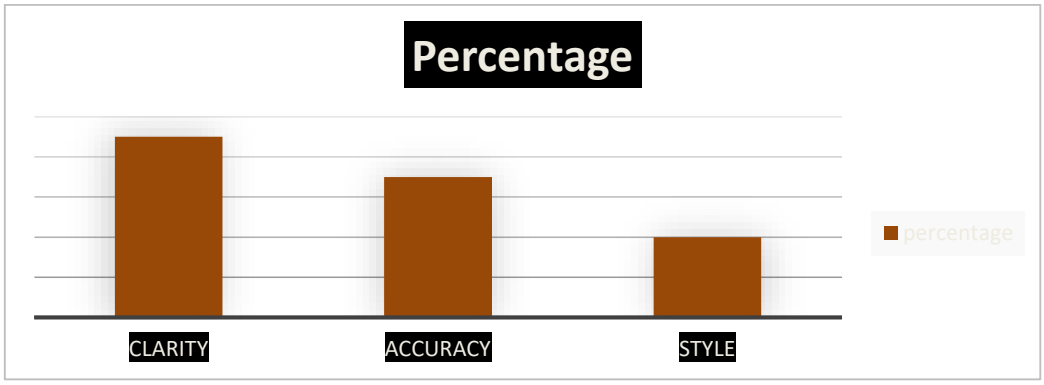

Figure 5 Overall Percentage of Each Criteria Average

Therefore, answering the research question of How is the quality of Google Machine Translation in translating Arabic News article headlines into English? Based on the analysis and statistics, the percentage of clarity is 95% based on the evaluation of translators, which means that the majority of the headlines translated by Google Translate, compared with human translators, are mostly understandable and fully understandable rated translations. This leads to the conclusion that Google Translate provided an understandable headline translation. Accuracy comes second in the highest percentage based on the statistics. Google Translate's translation of the headlines is 93.7% accurate compared to the human translation of the same headlines, indicating the correlation between clarity and accuracy. Google Translate style scored based on the evaluator's evaluation is 90.6%, which means Google was able to produce mostly appropriate translation when compared to human translation, even mostly the same human translation production of the same headline. Thus, to answer the research question, Google Translate performed excellently when translating Arabic headlines into English.

5. Conclusion

This study set out to evaluate the quality of Google Machine Translation (Google Translate) in translating Arabic news article headlines into English, focusing on key parameters such as clarity, accuracy, and style. The findings revealed that Google Translate performed

remarkably well in this context. With a clarity rate of 95%, the translations were predominantly understandable and aligned with human translation in terms of comprehensibility. The accuracy rate of 93.7% further highlights the tool's ability to produce translations that closely match human equivalents. Additionally, Google Translate achieved a style score of 90.6%, demonstrating its capability to replicate appropriate stylistic elements of human translations.

These results indicate that Google Translate is a highly effective tool for translating Arabic news headlines into English, providing reliable outputs despite the complexity of headlines and the rich morphological nature of the Arabic language. This research contributes to the understanding of machine translation performance in specialised linguistic contexts and underscores the potential for further improvement, particularly in enhancing stylistic nuances and addressing the unique challenges of Arabic translation.

5.1. Limitation and Delimitation:

The study exclusively evaluates the performance of Google Translate, disregarding other machine translation tools like Microsoft Translator, or Bing Translator. This narrows the scope and may not allow a broader comparison of different systems. The clarity, accuracy, and style scores were based on human evaluators' assessments, which may involve subjective judgments influenced by personal linguistic preferences or interpretations. News headlines are inherently unique due to their concise and stylised nature, and the findings may not generalise to other types of text, such as paragraphs, literary works, or informal texts. The number of participants in the survey limits the generalization of the conclusion, as well as the number of headlines limits the possible generalization of the study's results. The research has chosen specific types of news headlines (e.g., political, economic, or social) rather than a more diverse selection across all news categories, which could influence the findings.

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Representations of Masculinity: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Framing Violence Positively

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Abstract

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA henceforth) is applied in this study to examine the representation of masculinity and the positive framing of male violence in social media comments, specifically YouTube comments, in an Eastern society. The study investigates how language is used to normalize and positively justify male violence while consistently shifting blame and putting guilt onto female victims. It also investigates how gendered narratives of masculine culture shape perceptions of violence and victimization. Through an analysis of ten comments, the study identifies two primary patterns: (1) the framing of male violence as justifiable, often by portraying the female victim as responsible or deserving of the violence, and (2) the emotional bias in victim-blaming narratives that position women as responsible for the violence occurred to them. The findings reveal a broader cultural bias in favor of masculinity. The findings are reached by conducting a linguistic analysis and an ideological one in a form of discussion. Those are done adopting: Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional approach, Halliday and Mathiessen's (1985) Systemic Functional linguistics (SFL), Goffman's (1974) concept of frame and Entman's (1993) concept of selection and salience framing.

***Keywords*:** CDA, Gender, Masculinity, Framing, YouTube

1. Introduction

CDA is a well-established methodological direction adopted to explore and illustrate how language reflects, promotes, sustains, and even challenges relations of power in a society (Van Dijk, 2003:20). In the context of this study, CDA is particularly relevant as it allows for an in-depth investigation and exploration of how language constructs and sustains power dynamics and relations in digital spaces, such as YouTube comments. This study applies CDA to explore how discourse on YouTube reflects and shapes gendered power relations, particularly focusing on male/masculine violence in Eastern societies. By examining these comments, the study aims to highlight how gender representations in digital platforms contribute to societal perceptions of violence and victimization.

The study problem lies in the common tendency to normalize, sympathize, and even justify male violence, while consistently blaming female victims. The central aim of this research is to explore how masculinity is constructed through discourse in YouTube comments, and how this discourse contributes to the positive framing of male violence. To achieve this, the study critically analyzes selected comments on a case of female murder, focusing on how the comments work to positively frame male-related violence, minimize guilt and responsibility, and victimize women. The analysis is conducted through Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional approach, Halliday and Mathiessen's (1985)

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Goffman's (1974) concept of frame, and Entman's (1993) concept of selection and salience framing.

While existing literature on gendered discourse and violence often focuses on news media, there is a gap in the critical examination of gender narratives in user content, especially in the context of YouTube comments. This study addresses this gap by analyzing how online discourse may reinforce or challenge patriarchal ideologies through the framing of male violence and the victimization of women. The study sheds light on how gendered imbalances in power are perpetuated in these digital spaces, contributing to the reinforcement of patriarchal structures.

The study hypothesizes that: (i) male violence is often positively framed as justifiable or excusable, (ii) female victims are portrayed as either responsible for the violence committed against them or deserving, and (iii) the positive framings of male violence and masculinity preference perpetuate gendered imbalances in societies, further reinforcing patriarchal ideologies.

2. Critical and Critical Discourse Analysis

The core term in Critical Discourse analysis is "critical". Critical is a term that has been investigated in various ways with regards to the use of language and the autocracy of power in societies. This makes it a concept especially crucial to studies of power, resistance, hegemony and ideology in various disciplines of language. Locke (2004) defines "critical" as a habit by which a situation, a person or an object is evaluated in respect to set of defined rules, values and principles. Critical, as Wodak (2001) claims, is not used in its negative sense in CDA. It is not merely a matter of criticizing; it is rather a matter of warning others on observing and thinking critically when it comes to public issues, i.e. without easily accepting things as taken for granted. So, the term critical stands for skepticism rather than negativity, i.e. it pushes a person to be a skeptical reader or listener.

Roger (2004:3) asserts that within any critical study or approach, the analysts must only aim to "disclose power dynamics and demonstrate inequalities embedded in society". Therefore, Van Dijk (1998) defines critical discourse analysis's tendency as investigating power relations in discourses. This means that an analyst working on CDA study is supposed to focus on uncovering any sort of discrimination, bias and inequality established throughout the use of language. As a result, dominance and hegemony of a group over another are supposed to be made obvious.

3. Gender Bias and Masculine culture

Studies discuss the fact that bias can sometimes be explicit and other times implicit. Explicit bias is the overtly expressed inaccuracy, inequality, and prejudice in the language used. Explicit bias or prejudice is the direct negative addressing or viewpoint against some people who are considered out-groupers.

Implicit bias is the association made against something or some individuals without awareness, i.e. automatically. It is to establish a negative view or reaction or action unconsciously (Dovidio and Gaertner, 2010). In simple words, the difference between explicit and implicit bias lies in whether an individual's conscious is aware or unaware of the action.

Fiske (1998) confirms, personal and group identities are shaped by the social groups that people belong to and those who do not belong to the same social group of certain individual are considered out-groupers. People mostly show bias against those out-groupers by several means such as developing stereotypes, showing emotional prejudice and even behavioral ones. Therefore, studies on stereotype bias, for instance, focus on uncovering all sorts of bias established whether implicitly or explicitly.

One form of bias can result from a culture that favors masculinity. An interesting concept approached within studies of gender ideology is the concept of "masculine culture". Cheryan et al (2016:6) describe the concept as everything that relates to gender in societies (such as beliefs, attitudes, responsibilities, norms, values and structures) that result in contributing less rights, values and roles to women in those societies. That is, the concept reflects the traditional thoughts and beliefs that make men see women and women feel themselves less important and successful. The concept discusses stereotypes about women that make them appear as incompatible with men in all aspects of life. Furthermore, the approach suggests that negative gender ideologies are mostly spread in societies where men are the dominant group.

It is suffice to mention that with regards to gender ideologies Apfelbaum et al (2006:1-2) assert that gender inequality, as a kind of social issue and ideology, can be established in terms of two levels. Those are:

(i) The macro level of gender in/equality: this level covers the actual institutions and laws that seek to ensure equal rights to men and women in educations, careers, and all the aspects of life.

(ii) The micro level of gender in/equality: this level deals with the personal and family spheres. On family level, things such as distributing the household responsibilities and other home responsibilities reflect in the overall conventions established in societies about gender equality. On personal level, a study by *Ferguson et al.* (2016) found that female gamers on Twitch, a digital platform for gamers, received more harassment than their male counterparts, with comments often focusing on their gender or sexual attractiveness, rather than their skills. This reflects micro-level bias in digital interactions.

Accordingly, gender ideologies and gender equality issues can be resolved only if both levels are reconstructed. However, the changing that might occur in the two spheres (the macro and the micro) do not necessarily go hand in hand. Yet, no single sphere is less important than the other. Studies show that gender inequality and violence issues are directly

related to the way these two spheres work, which are mostly constructed via languages and discourses. On discourses, Fairclough (1992:67) arguers that discourses, and media discourse in specific, are ideological practices. They construct, change, naturalize and maintain world significations with regards to power relations.

Another distinctive term discussed in relation to gender ideologies is the concept of "gender equity". It refers to "fairness of treatment for women and men according to their respective needs". The fairness refers to is necessarily equivalent but not always equal. So, gender equity discusses the necessity of having equivalent roles, rights, opportunities, obligations and values by women rather than merely equal ones. The concept takes the respective needs of each gender into consideration in defining the rights and the obligations given to each of them. This concept is clearly different from both gender equality and gender ideology. Gender equality deals in a straightforward way with the outcomes of what each gender takes and gives in societies and judges them equally. Gender ideology, on the other hand, has nothing to do with mere equality or equity; it covers both the positive and the negative attitudes on gender.

4. Theories Adopted

In this study, two sets of theories are adopted. The first set, on the one hand, is related to framing theories. In this regard, two theories are precisely tackled. Those are Goffman's (1974) concept of frame and Entman's (1993) concept of Selection and Salience theory of framing. The second set, on the other hand, covers critical discourse analysis theories. Two main theories are adopted: Fairclough's three dimensional approach and selected Halliday and Mathiessen,'s (1985) Systemic Functional linguistics tools.

4.1. Framing Theories

Erving Goffman (1974), in a book entitled "Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience", coins the notion of "framing". He defines "framing" as a means to understand the way individuals or/and groups make sense of their social experiences. Goffman (ibid) explains that a "frame" is a pattern or a set of patterns of understanding and interpretation that allow language users to locate, identify, perceive, establish and label a social issue and its occurrences.

Framing theories establish the idea that the way things presented (framed) to specific audience influences the interpretations and the choices that people make about that information. So, frames are the organized and/or structured meanings with regard to a social issue or group covered (Bateson, 1972:197). In other words, framing means to "draw attention to certain attributes of the objects of news coverage, as well as to the objects themselves" (Goffman, 1974).

Within the realm of media discourse studies, Robert Entman, in 1993, presents a widely used concept of framing theory. In his theory, framing is defined as the process of making certain aspects of societies more salient in a text or discourse, such as media discourses. This process is done by highlighting certain elements, events, or characters and

downplaying some others in an objective way. This form or conceptualization of framing is specifically called "**Selection and Salience" framing theory.** The view of framing as selection and salience is the most often cited theory of framing. It reads as:

> To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. Typically frames diagnose, evaluate, and prescribe... (Entman, 1993: 52)

4.2. Critical Discourse Analysis Theories

Fairclough is one of the prominent figures in the field of CDA. He brings the thoughts of Lancaster school into the field of CDA. CDA, according to Fairclough (1995), is an interdisciplinary field of study. It is also a problem-oriented field that seeks investigating ideological implication with regards to social as well as political discourses. He therefore believes that languages are the means by which power and ideological relations are established and sustained. (ibid)

In his three-dimensional approach, Fairclough (1995) emphasizes that the purpose that CDA seeks to achieve is to explore systematically any relationship of victims within discourses. That is, it explores how a group takes over another in certain social environment. (ibid)

Fairclough's (1995) three dimensional approach consists of three complementary stages. Those stages are: description (textual analysis), interpretation (discursive practice) and explanation (social practice). The formal elements of the texts such as transitivity, lexical choices, mood and modality are investigated in the first stage. Fairclough (1992:139) states that the first stage of analysis helps people to be aware on the way certain linguistic choices can reveal the bias on coverage. Also, it shows people how those choices work on naturalizing and imposing ideas of the addressers on the addresses. Further, the relationship between the production and the consumption of a discourse and the discourse itself is covered in the second stage. That is, the second stage goes beyond a mere linguistic analysis. The final stage refers to the contextual and historical dimensions of the discourse. In this stage, the unrevealed details of the discourses under investigation, specifically those related to power and ideology, are uncovered on the base of investigating two sorts of contexts. Those are: the institutional context and the social context of the text (Fairclough, 1995:).

To accurately establish the textual analysis in Fairclough's (1995) first stage, it has become a defined tradition to select linguistic tools from Halliday and Mathiessen (1985) as toolkit for analysis, such as transitivity, lexical choices, mood and modality as mentioned earlier. Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999:134) assert the commonalities of perspective between SFL and CDA stating that "SFL theorizes Language in a way which harmonizes far more with the perspectives of critical social science than the other theories of language". Therefore, the following study follows the same step and takes the tools from SFL.

5. Data Collection

Data selected for this study involves ten comments made on a video shared on YouTube. The video covers the story of an Eastern lady, Nayera, being murdered by one of her male friends. Nayera Ashraf, an Egyptian lady, is a victim of gruesome murder. She is a 21-year-old college student. She was brutally attacked in Egypt's northern city of Mansoura. She was beaten and stabbed multiple times by Adel, her colleague, who ultimately slit her throat, tragically ending her life. According to local media reports, Nayera was about to enter her university when the attack occurred. Shocking footage of the incident shows her fighting for her life on the ground as bystanders attempt to intervene, while the assailant brandishes his knife before committing the fatal act. “It later emerged that Nayera had rejected a marriage proposal from her attacker. The assailant was quickly apprehended, and Egypt's public prosecutor charged him with premeditated murder. Prosecutors cited threatening messages found on Nayera's phone from the assailant as evidence”.

The ten comments, on the one hand, are selected based on the recurring patterns in their meaning and ideology. The video, on the other hand, is randomly chosen with only taking into consideration the brutality of the story. A brutal and an unjustifiable story is chosen to establish the required expectations for this critical study, namely that people should stand against such an action and never accept excuses. That is, in normal cases, it is not supposed to undermine the brutality of a murder and a murderer.

The selected ten comments are going to be first analysed linguistically. The linguistic analysis will rely on: Fairclough’s textual analysis, selected linguistic tools from SFL-namely transitivity, lexical choices, mood and modality, and theories of framing. Findings of the linguistic analysis will be reconsidered alongside with the social and historical contexts to establish a discussion of masculinity representation and the positive representation of male-related violence.

6. Textual Analysis

1.

Slang Arabic	Transliteration	Translation
انا من الناس الي مااحب اتابع قضايا القتل لكن ذي القضية جدا شدتني احسن ان فيه دوافع لذلك	ạnạ mina ạlnãạsi ạlīã mạạḥb ạtạbʿ qaḍāyā ạl̊qat̊li lakinã dẖī ạl̊qaḍīãẗi jidañạ sẖadat̊nī ạuḥ̊sinã ạnã fīhi dawāfiʿa lidẖalika	I don’t usually like to follow murder news, but this case has caught my attention. I feel there are motives behind it

The first part of the comment is just a general thought related to the commenter. She tries to make herself more reliable and trustworthy before presenting her own point of view about the story, the murder! She explains that the case seems very interesting to her and she couldn’t handle not following it and commenting. She then goes on to implicitly indicate that she does not want to blame the murder! However, she explicitly justifies why she does not want to blame the murderer. The reason that she utilizes to interpret and justify the murder case is presented via a mental process, i.e. what she feels. The commenter asserts

that the circumstance indicates the essentiality of motive existence. The contradiction in seeking motive and justification in a context where brutality is so obvious reveals a hidden bias against women and an obvious masculinity preference. Such a presence makes commenters opt to frame a violence positively.

The essential lexical choices in this comment are “like”, “follow”, “caught” , “attention” and “feel”. The use of these lexis shows how little sympathy the commenter has towards the victim, Nayera, although the video is so brutal. This also indicates an obvious masculinity support. Further, the use of “feel” alongside with “motive” shows that her comment is nothing but a hypothetical assumption yet effort is made to frame it as a factual one!

The mood is declarative. The commenter declares an opinion. She implicitly assets that she has no solid evidence for her assumption but she follows her sense which reflects her subjective stance.

2.

Slang Arabic	Transliteration	Translation
لابد فيه سبب للقتل	lạbd fīh sabab liľqat̊l	There must be a reason for the killing

Transitivity in this comment highlights a verbal process, i.e. an opinion about the killing and its reason. The commenter explicitly indicates that for a killing to happen, a reason is required. The reason is usually a motive. However, trying to find a motive in such an assertive and certain language is an implicit way to find justifications for the circumstances that surrounds the killer, i.e. the killing act. By doing so, a tendency to justify masculinity and their violent actions becomes obvious. There is also the cause circumstance here. It is the means by which he commenter emphasizes the cause-effect scenario to reframe the incident in a justified way.

The lexical item “a reason” is used as a collocation to “killing” as a way to seek justification. Further, the use of the modality “must” is a form of necessity, i.e. a necessity of existing a motive. These implications are represented via a declarative mood.

3.

Slang Arabic	Transliteration	Translation
العلاقات الغير شرعية حرام ونتايجها ديما تنتهي بجريمة	ạľʿalāãqāt ạľgẖuyr sẖurãʿīã ḥarām wntạyjhạ dymạ tan̊tahī bijarīma	The illegitimate relationships are forbidden (haram), and their consequences always end in a crime

Transitivity analysis indicates the employment of actional process in the above comment. It also puts forward a case circumstance throughout a hypothetical cause-effect relationship or scenario. It further generalizes the idea to make it look like ultimate result. In

other words, it indicates that any relationship other than the one socially and religiously defined as acceptable ends with a crime. This process and/ or circumstance leads to put the actor, those girls who get engaged in an illegitimate relations, including Nayera, in the accused position. That is, the actor is held part of the responsibility for being in a relationship that inevitably leads to criminal acts. This scenario frames victim women as responsible as long as the accused is a masculine character.

With regard to lexical choice, the use of the word "illegitimate – from a religious point of view"- reveals that the commenter has classified relationships into two sorts, a kind that leads to positive consequences and a kind that lead to negative consequences. Consequently, the first one is acceptable while the second one, as it is described, is "forbidden".

Another interesting lexis is the use of "always". The use of always implicates two things. The first is an idea of generalization. This means that the ideology in the comment goes upon not only Nayera, but also any other girl within the Eastern society. The second is the inevitability of the assumption. The commenter decides that the outcome of such a process (forbidden relations) is inevitably a negative attribute (crime). The focus on the attitudes of the victim rather than the incident itself and framing them as justifications is an indication of a positive framing of violence in favor of masculinity.

The mood is declarative. It shows certainty in presenting the assumption. The assumption is a form of belief or factual assertion.

4.

Slang Arabic	Transliteration	Translation
مالوم القاتل لان البنات اذا في شخص يحبها تتغلا عليه وماتحس بمشاعره .. كفوو	mạlwm ạl̊qātila lāna ạl̊bunãạt ạdẖạ fī sẖakẖṣ yuḥibũhā ttgẖlā ʿalaẙh w mạtḥs bimasẖāʿirihi .. kfww	I don't blame the killer because when girls have someone who loves them, they become demanding and don't feel his emotions. Well done/ bravo!

The process of transitivity used in this comment is a mental process. The commenter covers both his own mental process (what he feels towards the case) and the mental process of every girl, including Nayera. On the one hand, he attributes to himself the feeling of support and establishes understanding for the state of the killer by declaring that he does not blame the killer, which is an explicit positive framing of voilence. On the other hand, he positions the actor, Nayera, in a negative circumstance, which is an obvious masculinity preference. He provides two circumstances in connection to the mental process of Nayera. The first is manner circumstance where the actor, Nayera, is described as demanding and careless. The second is a cause circumstance where the act of negligence and selfishness is defined as the cause of the incident. In other words, it is defined as a justification for the killing incident!

The lexical use explicitly positions Nayera as the one to be blamed while positions the attacker as the one deserves sympathy. Lexes used with relation to Nayera are “demanding”, and “don’t feel” whereas lexes used with relation to the killer are “love”, and “emotion”. Further, the use of the appraisal expressions “well done/ bravo” (كفوو- kfww) indicates the lack of sympathy towards the real victim.

The mood is declarative. It is form of opinion or point of view but it shows a high degree of approval and praise.

5.

Slang Arabic	Transliteration	Translation
للاسف حب من طرف واحد	llạsf ḥub min̊ ṭaraf wāḥid	Unfortunately, it's one-sided love

The process of transitivity established here is a verbal process. The commenter expresses personal point of view on the incident. The process attributes a positive quality to the incident, i.e. “one-sided love”. The positive sense in the comment shows that the commenter lacks sympathy towards the victim (positively frames the violent incident) and on top of that seeks justification for the killer.

The lexical choice of “love” goes against the brutality of the incident. Therefore, it implies lack of sympathy. Also, the use of “unfortunately” indicates a negative expectation of a “one-sided love”. The mood used also participates in communicating the non-sympathetic implication. The mood is declarative presenting an opinion in a form of assertion and a fact.

6.

Slang Arabic	Transliteration	Translation
الي وصل الولد للقتل ان هي استغلته فترة وسحبت عليه وهو كان عاطفي بزيادة وميعرفش انه تستغلوا نقهر الولد وفعل فعلته	ạlī waṣ̊l ạl̊walad lil̊qat̊l ạnã hīa ạis̊tagẖalãt̊hu fat̊ra wasaḥabat̊ ʿalaẙh wahūa kān ʿāṭifī bizīāda wmyʿrfsẖ ạin̊ha tas̊tagẖilũ naq̊haru ạl̊walad wafaʿal fiʿ̊latahu	The reason the boy resorted to murder is that she took advantage of him for a while and misled him. He was overly emotional and didn't realize he was being exploited. The boy got upset and did what he did.

Nayera, via transitivity language, is presented as the actor who establishes three actional processes. Those three actional processes are all negative: “take advantage”, “mislead” and “exploit”. Consequently, Nayera is presented as establishing two negative circumstances and processes. Those are: manner and cause. She is described as having bad manners, exploiting people and taking advantage of them. She is also described as being responsible of the negative emotional state of the murderer and subsequently of his violent action. The shift of guilt over the feminine victim is an indication of masculinity preference and a tendency for framing male-related violence incidents positively.

The process of transitivity that is used to explain the murderer's state is the mental process. The comment shows that the killer has gone through tough time which is what requires sympathy. This is another side of the effort made to frame male-related violence incidents positively.

The lexical choice also works on positioning the murderer as the victim and Nayera as the accused. Lexes used in relation to Nayera are: "took advantage", "mislead", "exploit" whereas lexes used in relation to the murderer are: "exploited", "emotional" and "upset". The lexes used to describe the state of the killer seek a kind of sympathy for the killer while the set of lexis used to describe Nayera aims to announce her as the guilty. The mood works in line with the main idea as well. It is declarative. It declares the viewpoint that the murderer's action is nothing but a reaction to emotional exploitation.

7.

Slang Arabic	Transliteration	Translation
لو كان احترمت نفسها وصانت قدرها مايصيرش فيها هكا	laẘ kān ạiḥ̊taramat̊ naf̊suhā waṣānat̊ qad̊ruhā mạyṣyrsẖ fīhā hakãạ	If she had respected herself and preserved her dignity, this wouldn't have happened to her

The comment explicitly assigns responsibility to the victim. The transitivity process of action clarifies that. The commenter shows that the action of the actor, Nayera, is the reason to what she has been through, a murder. The process is connected to a condition cause circumstance. The circumstance is based on a hypothetical cause-effect relation. The conditional relation states that the kind of actions she has done (not respecting herself and not preserving her dignity) are the main cause of the effect, the murder. This structuring of transitivity clarifies the way the commenter asserts that the murderer is not the one to be blamed and the way the commenter tries to shift away the attention from the violent incident of murder by framing the meant-to-be causes as more prominent incidents.

Two interesting lexical items are found in this comment. Those are self-respect and dignity. The use of these lexes reveals the societal obligations assigned on women and the inheriting preference of masculinity.

The mood is declarative. It presents a perceived obligation required from women that contributes in defining their position in the society.

8.

Slang Arabic	Transliteration	Translation
اهلها تخلصو منها .. سيناريو فظيع لانها تسير في طريق مشبوه ليتخلصو من عارها فضربو عصفورين بحجارة واحدة وعادل الله يرحمه ضحية	ạh̊lihā takẖalũṣū min̊hā .. sīnār̊yūu faẓīʿu lānihā tasīr fī ṭarīq mash̊būh lytkẖlṣw min̊ ʿārihā faḍar̊bū ʿaṣ̊fūraẙni biḥajãạra wāḥida waʿādili ạllhi yar̊ḥamuhu ḍaḥīã	Her family got rid of her... A terrible scenario because she was heading down a dangerous path, so they got rid of their shame. They killed two birds with one stone, and unfortunately, Allah rest his soul, he became a victim.

This comment shifts the blame on Nayera's family and consequently on her. The actor is, therefore, her family and her. The actional processes of her family are described as "get rid of her", "get rid of their shame" and "killed". The actional processes of Nayera are "heading down" and "shame". The circumstance that surrounds Nayera is negatively described. She is seen as being departed from the societal norms of their community and, thus, deserves what happened to her. As a consequence to that, her family are attributed with the negative circumstances described above. Thus, they are held responsible for her harmful experience.

Lexical choice in this comment is totally against the victim. She is described with lexes like "heading down" and "shame". The attacker, on the other hand, is defined by the lexical item "victim". So, blame is explicitly shifted. Further, The mood is declarative which shows that the commenter wants to sound like declaring a factual statement.

9.

Slang Arabic	Transliteration	Translation
تستاهل كل فتاة تقوم باستغلال الشباب وهكذا حوادث تسبب اضطرابات للشباب مما يجعله يفقد السيطرة على نفسه ويفكر بالانتقام.. المتهم الرئيسي في القضية هي نيرة	tstạhl kulũ fatāẗ taqawũm biạiṡtigẖlāal ạlsẖābāb wahakadẖā ḥwādiṯẖ tasabũb ạiḍ̊ṭirābāt lilsẖābāb mimãạ yaj̊ʿaluhu yaf̊qidu ạlsãẙṭara ʿalay naf̊sah wayufakĩr biạl̊ạiṅtiqām .. ạl̊mutãham ạlrãyi̇ysi fī ạl̊qaḍīã hīa nayĩraẗu[n]	Every girl who exploits young men deserves killing. Such incidents cause disturbances among young men, leading them to lose control and contemplate revenge... The accused in this case is Nayera.

The analysis of transitivity figures out a sequence of cause-effect actions. The action process attributed to Nayera is a negative one, namely "exploits". The circumstance surrounds the action is the consequences that it results. The consequences, which are the mental processes of the murderer and his violent reaction, are the effect or the outcome of the cause. This sequence of cause-effect works on shifting the blame on the victim and framing the violent incident as a justifiable one. However, the commenter explicitly reveals

his point of view in the concluding sentence via an identification process: “the accused is Nayera”. Further, the structure of the transitivity does not only promote for hypothetical cause-effect scenario but also generalizes it on every girl in the same society that undergoes similar incident, which is another obvious tendency to masculine culture.

Lexical choice in this comment reveals the position of the commenter and the way he sees each participant, Nayera and the murderer. The lexes used in relation to Nayera are: “exploits”, “cause disturbance” and “deserves killing” whereas the lexes used in relation to the killer are: disturbed, “lose control” and “revenge”. The lexical items work on getting sympathy for the murderer and blaming the victim.

The mood is declarative. It as usual declares the personal point of view of the commenter and presents it as a certain fact.

10.

Slang Arabic	Transliteration	Translation
ذي سببها الانفتاح الزايد	dẖī sababihā ạl̊ạiṅfitāḥa ạlzãạyida	Excessive openness/freedom is the cause.

Transitivity analysis provides obvious clue on shifting responsibility and favoring masculinity. It reveals how Nayera’s behavior is stated as the main cause for the incident. This structuring positions her as the one responsible for the attack, i.e. the attack was a consequence for her behavior and her family’s negligence, carelessness and inadequate protection that resulted from over openness. Evaluative language is obvious in the lexical choices of this comment. The word “cause” reflects negative perspective on Nayera. Also, the use of the adjective “excessive” to highlight inappropriate behavior is another indication of shifting guilt and responsibility and favoring masculinity.

The mood is declarative. It declares a certainty in presenting judgments on Nayera and her behavior.

7. Discussion

The analysis of the ten comments above shows that eastern people often tend to normalize and positively frame male violence on social media even when the incident is clearly violent. The normalization of positive framing of male-violence is done by two means:

1. **Framing male-violence as necessarily justifiable:**

One of the most significant naturalized thinking and ideological implications figured out throughout the analysed comments is the consistent framing of male-related violence as justifiable and the consistent framing of female victimization as deserving. This pattern of thinking and viewing things achieved through the strategic utilization of language, as seen in the detailed analysis, which redirects responsibility and attention from the perpetrator (a male) to the victim (a female). This is usually done through the portrayal and coverage of women as guilty and provocative or even deserving of the violent fate. For example,

comments number 1,2,4,5,7, 8 and 9 redirect blame and responsibility entirely onto the female victim which is a scenario that constructs the narrative that the victim's attitude and behavior justifies her victimization and works as an excuse to tolerate the perpetrator, the male one. The redirection of the responsibility to come up with justifications is done by all the linguistic means possible, as the detailed analysis above shows, such as transitivity, lexical items and modality.

In addition to serving positive framing of male-related violence, this pattern of viewing gender related violence in Eastern society pictures any male perpetrator as a victim of various circumstances such as their emotional state, the actions and attitudes of the woman, or any form of societal pressure. In the comment number 6., for instance, which reads as "the reason the boy resorted to murder is that she took advantage of him for a while," the language establishes a sympathetically justified portrayal of a killer! The sympathetic portrayal is done by focusing on the perceived claimed-exploitation and the killer's emotional vulnerability.

2. Framing female victims as responsible for the incident:

A recurring style of shifting blame from the male perpetrator and framing female victims as responsible and guilty for the violent incidents they experience has been evident in the analysis of the ten comments. There seems to be a tendency to redirect the accountability to the victim which reflects a cultural bias in the favor of masculinity. Throughout the analysis of the comments, several mechanisms emerge that specifically help to position the victim as responsible and guilty for the incident, such as:

- In some comments (for instance 3 and 7), there is a direct or indirect suggestion that the victim's actions led to the incident, which is a scenario that makes female-victims "deserve" what happened to them.
- In some other comments such as in comment 6, focus is given to the victim's perceived or supposed flaws, such as being "demanding,", "careless", "selfish," or "exploiting" others, which in turn become justifications for violence
- Another common pattern is the portrayal of the male killer as a victim of emotional need and distress.
- Many comments, such as comment 10 that discusses excessive freedom, invoke cultural expectations and put them on women specifically as a way of justifying violence.

An essential and interesting frame in the comments is the emotional bias that has been made implicitly and explicitly obvious. Commenters form both gender show a low degree of sympathy with the female victim despite of the discussible brutality of the incident. In comment 1, for instance, the female commenter seems to be subconsciously comfortable and familiar with the idea of not being sympathetic to women victims unless it is proven that there is no hidden motive lead to her victimization. This is also seen in the other comments where the first thought that every commenter, male and female, establishes is that there should be something wrong with the female victim. This can reveal the fact the eastern society is a masculine culture where even women themselves find it difficult to be defined as real victims of male-violence.

Another evident masculinity preference and positive representation of male-related violence is seen in the selection and salience framing of the comments. In all the ten comments, the salient character is the victim. However, it is not her victimization that is selected to be portrayed or to be seen as the salient element of her character and story. It is rather the negative attitudes, behaviors and circumstances that can be related to her and which serve as excuses for her victimization. For instance:

- In comment 1 and 2, a shift in attention is explicitly made from the brutality of the incident to the necessity of justification existence.
- In comment 3, focus is given on the forbidden kind of relationship which is claimed that the victim had with the killer.
- In comment 4, focus is given to (a hypothetical) a reading of the vicitim's character which shows her as a demanding and careless person. This is also done in comment 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 where the victim is negatively pictured.
- In comment 5, the overall shape of the story is changed by selecting the tiny detail of the story where the killer was once attacked to the victim.

Furthermore, selection and salience framing is another common means by which masculinity is served. The pattern of selection and salience shows that commenters consciously and subconsciously tend to, on the one hand, redirect the attention away from the murderer and his brutal action. On the other hand, the framings redirect the attention of the society towards digging deeper in the character of the victim to come up with attitudes and set of behaviour that justify the incident and shifts responsibility onto her.

Accordingly, the analysed comments and the discussions presented illustrate how exactly gender bias and societal norms in Eastern society lead to the negative framing of female victims as guilty for the violence occurred to them. Therefore, it is sufficient to refer that this framing, in turn, allows and promotes for the following: (i) the normalization of male-related violence, (ii) the reinforcement of patriarchal ideologies (masculine culture), (iii) shifting blame away from the perpetrators, and (iv) justifying the unjustifiable. These discussions not only reveal how the public perceives such relations and incidents but also highlight the necessity for a broader societal move toward gender equality and the rejection of positive framing of violence and victim-blaming narratives.

8. Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore and portray the deeply ingrained gender biases for the favor of masculinity present in Eastern society, where male-related violence is framed as necessarily justifiable while female victimization is highly minimized. The analysis of the ten comments has revealed a consistent pattern of redirecting responsibility and accountability away from perpetrators, namely a male one, onto female victims. This pattern serves to reinforce patriarchal norms and ideologies that favor masculinity and masculine culture. Throughout a strategic use of language, selection and salience framing and emotional bias, commenters consciously and subconsciously normalize male-related violence and excuse and justify brutal behaviors that result in gender inequality. The

implications of this study and its findings are far-reaching; the study findings uncover (i) how the public in eastern society perceives violence against women, and (ii) how societal expectations and norms shape and reshape the discourse on this regard.

The implications of this study extend far beyond the immediate findings. The findings of this study reinforce the utility of CDA as a field in uncovering hidden ideologies in social media interactions. Moreover, the study benefits gender studies by highlighting how masculine norms, often internalized by both men and women, influence the collective perceptions of victimization and violence. However, it is sufficient to indicate that this study, while insightful, is not without its limitations. One primary constraint is the small sample size which analyzed. While these comments represent a snapshot of social media discourse, they do not fully capture the range of opinions present in larger social media communities. So, future studies could broaden the sample size and include multiple social media platforms to provide a more comprehensive analysis.

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Translating Symbolism: Cultural Filtering in *The Last Lover*

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Abstract

Symbolism is a cornerstone for exploring philosophical and existential themes in avant-garde fiction. This study examines how the symbolic elements in Can Xue's novel *The Last Lover* are translated and assesses how these translated symbols change the novel's themes for English-speaking readers. Known for its surreal and fragmented narrative style, *The Last Lover* employs symbolism to convey existentialist themes, cultural ideologies and philosophical explorations. Focusing on key symbols such as houses, animals and dreams, this study explores the significance of these symbols in the original and translated texts during the translation process, analysing how language choice, cultural interpretation and translator strategies affect the symbolic depth and resonance of the text. The study found that while some universal symbols ostensibly retained thematic coherence in the translated text, the deeper layers of symbolism inherent in the original language were lost during translation. This loss of symbolism undoubtedly affects readers' interpretations of the avant-garde text's deeper themes. This highlights the challenges faced by translators in translating culture-specific or abstract symbols in avant-garde fictions. This analysis contributes to a better understanding of the complexities of translating symbolism, emphasising the delicate balance between cultural fidelity and cultural diversity.

***Keywords*:** Symbolism, Avant-Garde Literature, *The Last Lover*, Can Xue, Cross-Cultural

1. Introduction

Translation is far more than a linguistic process; it is an act of cultural negotiation, especially when dealing with texts rich in symbolism and cultural nuance. Can Xue's *The Last Lover*, a surreal and avant-garde novel, exemplifies the complexities inherent in translating culturally specific symbols. This novel is not only a work of fiction but also a deeply layered exploration of identity, alienation, and existential questions; all rendered through symbols and motifs deeply embedded in Chinese cultural traditions. Translating such a work requires navigating the intricate interplay between universal and culture-specific meanings, a challenge that is compounded by the abstract and fragmented nature of Can Xue's narrative style. This paper examines the process of translating symbolism in *The Last Lover* through the lens of cultural filtering, with a focus on the theory of cultural schemas as a framework for understanding the challenges faced by translators.

Translation often involves more than converting text from one language to another; it is a bridge between cultural contexts. Symbolism, a literary device where symbols are imbued with deeper meanings, can present significant challenges in translation. Translators must grasp both the literal and symbolic meanings of the text to preserve its essence. Misinterpretation or cultural incongruities may lead to a loss of symbolic depth, altering the reader's experience. In Chinese literature, the moon often symbolizes longing or unfulfilled desires. Translating a poem like Li Bai's *Quiet Night Thought* involves maintaining the simplicity and emotional resonance of the original. Lines such as "床前明月光" (chuáng qián

míng yuè guāng) literally translate to "Bright moonlight before my bed." However, without careful rendering, the symbolic undertones of nostalgia and solitude might be lost. A skillful translation, such as "The bright moonlight before my bed, / Seems frost upon the ground," retains both the literal and symbolic meanings, evoking the melancholic tone intended by the poet. Especially symbols in avant-garde literature pose challenges for translators.

Avant-garde literature is distinguished by its experimental approaches to form, language, and meaning, often employing symbolism to disrupt traditional narrative structures and provoke new ways of thinking. Symbols in avant-garde texts are rarely straightforward; they are layered, abstract, and often deliberately ambiguous. These symbols serve as a conduit for exploring complex themes such as alienation, identity, and the interplay between reality and imagination. Translating symbols in avant-garde literature always result in the problems of cultural filtering. Cultural filtering in translation refers to the process by which elements of a source text are adapted, omitted, or reshaped to align with the cultural and cognitive frameworks of the target audience. While some symbols in *The Last Lover*—such as natural imagery or the motif of dreams—retain a degree of universality, their deeper layers of meaning are often shaped by cultural schemas that may not exist in the target culture.

This article examines the cultural filtering in the translation of symbols in avant-garde literature, focusing on the potential loss of symbolic meanings in Can Xue's *The Last Lover*. The theoretical foundation for this analysis lies in cultural schemas, which provide a lens to examine how shared cultural knowledge shapes the creation and interpretation of meaning. By analyzing how cultural schemas influence the symbolic and thematic dimensions of *The Last Lover*, this paper highlights the pivotal role of the translator as a cultural mediator. The study underscores that while translation inevitably involves some loss of meaning, a nuanced approach to cultural filtering can minimize this loss, ensuring that the text retains its symbolic richness and avant-garde spirit across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

1.1. Translation and Symbolism

Translation serves as a bridge between cultures, languages, and literary traditions, enabling readers to access works that might otherwise remain obscured by linguistic barriers. Symbolism, as a critical element in literature, often presents unique challenges to translators due to its nuanced and culturally embedded nature. Symbols operate as multilayered constructs, often drawing on specific cultural, historical, or philosophical contexts to evoke meaning beyond the literal. Translators, therefore, face the dual task of decoding the original symbolic intent and re-encoding it within the target language and culture. For instance, a symbol deeply rooted in one culture might be obscure or carry different connotations in another. Translators must therefore engage with the cultural and historical underpinnings of symbols to render them accessible and meaningful for the target audience. As Barthes (1977) notes, "The indeterminate nature of symbols invites interpretive engagement, creating a space where meaning is negotiated rather than imposed" (p. 42).

"Symbols are vehicles for the expression of ideas too complex or abstract to be conveyed in direct language" (Newmark, 1988, p. 95). The process of translating symbolism requires a profound understanding of the source text's cultural and linguistic dimensions. A translator must navigate between fidelity to the original work and adaptability to the target audience, ensuring that the symbolic resonance is neither lost nor distorted. This dynamic often necessitates the use of cultural filtering, a strategy where the translator modifies or reinterprets symbols to align with the cultural framework of the target language. Such interventions can illuminate universal themes or introduce new layers of interpretation, but they also risk altering the author's intended meaning. The act of translating symbolism is an intricate balancing act. It involves preserving the author's artistic vision while making the work resonate in a new linguistic and cultural context. By embracing this complexity, translators play a crucial role in ensuring that literature transcends boundaries, enabling readers to connect with its symbolic depth across time and space.

1.2. Symbols in Avant-garde Literature

Symbols play a pivotal role in avant-garde literature, reflecting its defiance of traditional forms and conventions. Unlike classical literary symbols that are often universal and culturally resonant, avant-garde symbols are frequently abstract, fragmented, and personal. They challenge conventional interpretation, compelling readers to engage deeply with the text to uncover layers of meaning. This approach aligns with the avant-garde's broader objective of disrupting established norms and reimagining artistic expression.

Prominent avant-garde movements such as Surrealism, Dadaism, and Futurism employ symbols to evoke emotion, critique society, and explore the subconscious. Surrealist writers, for instance, often draw on dream imagery and Freudian psychoanalysis, utilizing symbols that defy logic to explore hidden truths (Breton, 1924). Dadaists, on the other hand, use symbols to mock established societal values and challenge the rationality of art (Tzara, 1918). These movements illustrate how symbols in avant-garde literature are not merely decorative but act as instruments of rebellion and innovation. The interpretive ambiguity of avant-garde symbols aligns with the genre's experimental ethos. By rejecting traditional frameworks, avant-garde literature invites readers to participate in constructing meaning, thereby fostering a dynamic interplay between text and audience (Childs, 2000). The experimental nature of avant-garde literature lies in not only in symbols but also in language. In Poggioli's view, literary avant-garde's concentration on linguistic creativity is a "necessary reaction to the flat, opaque, and prosaic nature of our public speech" (Poggioli, 1968). More importantly, the avant-garde consciousness of language can be "cathartic and therapeutic in respect to the degeneration afflicting common language through conventional habits. (Poggioli, 1968).

So, translating avant-garde literature rich in symbolism often results in the partial loss of meaning, as symbols deeply rooted in the source language's cultural, historical, and contextual dimensions rarely transfer seamlessly. While some universal symbols—such as natural elements or archetypal imagery—may retain their thematic coherence in the translated text, the intricate layers of meaning tied to the original language are frequently

diminished. These layers often rely on linguistic nuances, such as wordplay, idiomatic expressions, or phonetic associations, which are unique to the source culture. For example, a symbol in Surrealist literature might invoke cultural myths or historical events that evoke a profound emotional or intellectual response in the source audience but fail to resonate similarly with readers of the target language. This disconnection risks reducing the richness of the avant-garde text to a mere surface-level representation of its themes.

1.3. Can Xue and *The Last Lover*

Can Xue is one of the representatives of Chinese avant-garde writers, known for her experimental writing styles and themes. Can Xue has gained international acclaim for her unique narrative techniques and surreal way of storytelling. Can Xue writes novels, short stories, novellas and literary criticism of Franz Kafka, Jorge Luis Borges, and Dante. Up to now, her works in Chinese include 2 collected works, 12 novels, 25 novelettes, 15 essays and reviews, and 1 translation. Her works have been translated into English, Japanese, Italian, French, German, etc. and won many awards.

She was not known to the general public in China until she was listed as one of the most competitive candidates for the Nobel Prize in literature in 2019. Chen Xiaozhen, an editor of Hunan Literature and Art Publishing House, said in a video interview in 2019: "In fact, although Can Xue's work is said to be relatively niche in our country, her work has always received a high degree of attention abroad. She is one of the Chinese writers whose works have been translated to foreign countries the most (其实残雪的作品虽然说在我们国内比较小众，其实她的作品一直以来在国外受到很高的关注度。她是中国翻译到国外作品最多的中国作家之一)."（https://www.pearvideo.com/video_1610361）Can Xue's works focus exclusively on a deeper level, using the artist's creations as the subject matter, questioning the nature of art, and achieving the most ideal state of "pure literature". Her works are characterized by abstract themes and unconventional styles. Her works offer thought-provoking and challenging reading.

The Last Lover written in 2005 was translated by Annelise Finegan Wasmoen and published by Yale University Press in 2014. It received Best Translated Book Award in 2015. In addition to this, *The Last Lover* was named "Book of the Year" by The Independent. It was also the only book to be long-listed for both the National Translation Award and the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize. Love is a pervasive theme in the novel; however, *The Last Lover* often delves into how individuals are continually drifting apart through both real and imagined dimensions of space and time. The novel centers around three main couples: Joe and Maria, who have a son named Daniel; Vincent and Lisa; and Reagan and Ida. Each chapter delves into the life of one of these characters, exploring their journeys through both real and imagined worlds. Despite the growing distances between the central couples, their communication becomes more profound. While there is a loose overarching narrative, *The Last Lover* starts in the West and by its conclusion, several characters have traveled to the East, either in their dreams or in reality.

As an avant-garde novel, *The Last Lover* challenges readers to understand its subject matter. The translator, Annelise Finegan Wasmoen, says that *"The Last Lover* is a difficult novel" and "Can Xue's style of writing tends to resist immediate attempts at sense-making, but to read her fiction carefully, especially in the longer form of a novel, is to realize that there are intricate patterns and motifs woven through the text." (https://www.rochester.edu/College/translation/threepercent/2015/04/27/why-this-book-should-win-qa-with-annelise-finegan-wasmoen-about-the-last-lover/). She also says in another interview that: "What kept me translating was the incredible intricacy of the text: the novel yields new insights even after a dozen readings." (https://www.rochester.edu/College/translation/threepercent/2015/04/27/why-this-book-should-win-qa-with-annelise-finegan-wasmoen-about-the-last-lover/)

This elucidates that the themes of *The Last Lover* resist immediate attempts at sense-making and readers cannot quickly grasp the plot or meaning in a straightforward manner. *The Last Lover* is a literary work that operates on multiple levels, requiring interpretative effort. It needs to be explored in every way, especially the intricate layers of symbolic elements central to the theme. This article analyzes the culture-specific symbols which are closely tied to the following main themes: love and longing, connection and isolation, identity and self-exploration. Love in *The Last Lover* is depicted as an elusive, often unfulfilled yearning that transcends physical attraction or traditional romance. Characters experience love as an existential pursuit, searching for a connection that often feels out of reach. The characters often feel disconnected from one another, even within close relationships. This sense of isolation highlights the human struggle to bridge internal worlds and communicate effectively.

2. Methodology

2.1. Cultural Schemas

Cultural schemas are a foundational concept in cultural linguistics, offering insights into how shared knowledge within a cultural group shapes communication, cognition, and interpretation. These culturally constructed mental frameworks guide individuals in processing information, interpreting symbols, and engaging with their environment. They are rooted in collective experiences, traditions, and values and influence perceptions and interactions both within and across cultures (Sharifian, 2017). They encompass shared understandings of social roles, behaviors, metaphors, and narratives, operating unconsciously to facilitate navigation of cultural contexts.

In translation, cultural schemas are critical for maintaining the essence of the original text while ensuring accessibility for a new audience. They govern how meaning is interpreted and reproduced across linguistic and cultural boundaries, highlighting the importance of understanding culturally specific mental frameworks.

The concept of schemas originates in cognitive psychology, where schema theory describes mental structures used to organize and interpret information. Cultural schemas build on this idea by emphasizing their shared nature within cultural groups. Different

cultural groups naturally interpret culturally embedded concepts in distinct ways. For instance, in Can Xue's novel, *The Last Lover*, "天堂" (Tiāntáng) in Chinese and "heaven" in English differ significantly due to their roots in distinct cultural, religious, and philosophical traditions. In Chinese, "天堂" often carries a more poetic and metaphorical sense. It can describe any beautiful, idealized place or state, not necessarily linked to the afterlife. For example, a serene landscape might be called "人间天堂" (a paradise on earth). The focus is less on personal salvation and more on collective harmony or natural beauty. In English, "heaven" is more commonly associated with an afterlife and is often used in religious or spiritual contexts. It may also symbolize ultimate happiness or perfection, but the connection to the divine or God is usually implicit.

So these schemas, deeply rooted in cultural practices and histories, are fundamental to understanding human diversity because they shape how individuals perceive and interact with the world. Language plays a pivotal role in this process, acting as both a transmitter and reinforcer of cultural schemas. (Sharifian2017) Through daily conversations and literary works, language embeds these shared frameworks, allowing them to be passed down across generations and influencing everything from interpersonal communication to the interpretation of complex ideas.

2.2. Challenges in Translating Symbols

Translating symbols in avant-garde novels is uniquely challenging, as these symbols are often embedded within cultural schemas—shared cognitive frameworks that shape how individuals interpret the world. Cultural schemas influence the symbolic meanings of objects, events, and concepts, making translation a process fraught with the potential for misinterpretation or loss of meaning (Sharifian, 2011). Avant-garde literature, with its deliberate use of ambiguous, multi-layered symbols, complicates this further by frequently challenging or subverting established cultural schemas.

One key challenge is the translator's need to navigate differing cultural schemas between the source and target audiences. For example, in Can Xue's *The Last Lover*, symbols such as "fog" or "labyrinth" might evoke existential confusion in one cultural context but resonate differently in another due to divergent metaphysical or literary traditions. Translators must understand and bridge these schema differences to ensure that the symbolic essence is neither diluted nor misrepresented (Katan, 2009).

Additionally, cultural schemas are dynamic and context-dependent, often requiring nuanced interpretation. Avant-garde novels frequently destabilize conventional schemas, forcing readers to reconstruct meaning. For instance, the fragmented narrative style or abstract imagery in these texts may contradict familiar schemas, posing interpretative challenges for translators who must balance fidelity to the source text with comprehensibility in the target culture (Cronin, 2006).

Translating symbolism in *The Last Lover* by Can Xue demands a deep understanding of the novel's surreal, layered narrative and its complex use of imagery. Symbolism in the

novel often defies conventional interpretation, blending universal themes like love, alienation, and memory with cultural elements rooted in Chinese traditions and philosophies. A translator's challenge lies in preserving this richness while making the text accessible to readers from a different cultural and linguistic background.

Key symbols in *The Last Lover*, such as light, dreams, and fragmented landscapes, often carry dual meanings—reflecting both personal and collective struggles. In the novel, for example, natural imagery like rivers and mountains reflects Chinese-specific schemas of interconnectedness and balance. Translators must decide how to handle such symbols: whether to preserve their original meanings or adapt them to align with the target culture's schemas. During the translation process, the primary challenge faced by translators lies in preserving the deeper layers of symbolism inherent in the original language, as these layers significantly influence readers' interpretations of the avant-garde text's themes and any loss in translation could diminish the work's depth and complexity.

3. Case Analysis

In *The Last Lover*, landscapes are not static or passive. They are dynamic, multifaceted, and deeply intertwined with the characters' psychological, emotional, and philosophical states. The description of landscapes serves multiple roles that go beyond mere physical settings. They are not just physical settings but are rich with symbolic, philosophical, and emotional layers that carry specific cultural resonances. In *The Last Lover*, by using landscapes in this way, the author, Can Xue challenges readers to engage with her text on multiple levels, encouraging interpretations that transcend the literal and delve into the symbolic and metaphysical. The landscapes serve as mirrors, symbols, and metaphors, enriching the novel's exploration of themes such as alienation, identity, and the human condition. For example, mountains and rivers (山水, shān shuǐ) are traditionally associated with harmony, contemplation, and the flow of life. In *The Last Lover*, these natural elements often appear surreal and fragmented, creating a departure from traditional associations while still drawing on their symbolic heritage. The recurring imagery of fog, shadows, or shifting light can symbolize ambiguity, mystery, and the fragility of perception. It conveys abstract themes such as alienation, identity, and the search for meaning in a fragmented world. So we can find that translating landscapes in Can Xue's *The Last Lover* presents unique challenges due to the cultural nuances embedded in her descriptions.

The translator, Annelise Finegan Wasmoen, showed her translation style and the reasons behind them in an interview, "Can Xue refers to her writing as having an inner mechanism, which sounds mysterious, but there is an associative logic that runs through all of her fiction. Since it was important to follow this associative logic that relates certain words or images to each other, I chose a translation style that kept as much consistency as possible, retaining correlations instead of attempting to achieve a natural flow. This was in the service of leaving the reader in English with the same interpretative leeway as the reader of the original, which is a risky sort of thing. This was the first novel I translated, and in other

translations I've gone in the other direction, but this specific text seemed to call for an extreme level of fidelity: translate everything; explain nothing."
(https://www.rochester.edu/College/translation/threepercent/2015/04/27/why-this-book-should-win-qa-with-annelise-finegan-wasmoen-about-the-last-lover/)

We can find that Annelise Finegan Wasmoen employed foreignization in translating the text rather than domestication, which preserves the original tone and structure, exposing the target audience to the source culture. Foreignization and domestication are key strategies in translation studies. Foreignization retains the cultural and linguistic distinctiveness of the source text, allowing readers to experience its "otherness." Venuti (1995) defines foreignization as a "resistance to ethnocentric cultural values," emphasizing transparency in reflecting the source culture. In contrast, domestication adapts the text to the target audience's cultural norms, prioritizing readability and familiarity. Venuti (1995) describes domestication as "an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values." These approaches reflect a translator's ethical and practical choices, balancing fidelity to the source text with accessibility for the target audience.

Foreignizing the symbols in avant-garde literature deeply rooted in Chineses culture undoubtedly influences readers' understanding of the novel's themes. Foreignizaion translation can result in symbolic associations rooted in Chinese culture that may not be fully translated into English. As Annelise Finegan Wasmoen herself said: "a translation style that kept as much consistency as possible" is "a risky sort of thing". English readers are likely to interpret word for word translation terms through their own cultural frameworks, potentially altering the scene's tone and meaning compared to the original Chinese text. The following examples illustrate the cultural nuances embedded in the text.

Case 1

ST: 乔坐在办公室的窗口，目送里根的身影消失在街的拐角，在心中想象着那个叫作"**海角**"的最南端的小地方的自然风景。（《最后的情人》）

TT: Joe sat at the window of his office watching Reagan's form disappear around a corner and imagined the natural scenery of that small place in the far south called **the Cape.** (*The Last Lover*)

In the first case, Joe, one of the characters in *The Last Lover*, sits at the table and watches Reagan, Joe's client, disappear. Joe distances himself from the present moment. His imagination of the natural scenery indicates his desire to escape from his reality and his longing for a distant landscape beyond reach, simpler and more meaningful existence. This emotional state is shown through Joe's thoughts about his client, Reagan: "Reagan had to rush back what very day. He was always hurried like this, and Joe had the impression that his life was full of vigorous activity." Reagan's "vigorous activity" is the desired state of real life for Joe, which is only realized through his contemplation.

Culturally, “海角” (hǎijiǎo) carries deep connotations in Chinese, often tied to geographical, emotional, and literary imagery. Geographically, “海角” (cape) refers to a distant coastal or headland area where the land meets the sea. It is often combined with “天涯” (tiān yá, "the ends of the earth") in the phrase “海角天涯”, which symbolizes vast remoteness or emotional separation. The phrase evokes a sense of yearning for what is distant or unattainable. “海角”(hǎijiǎo) in Chinese stands for the edge of the world, evoking imagery of remoteness, isolation, and the farthest reaches of a journey. The term sometimes conveys a sense of exploration or the desire to reach an unattainable or mythical place. The concept of “海角天涯” might evoke similar sentiments of emotional distance.

In English, “cape” carries cultural connotations of exploration, transition, and human endeavor, often tied to maritime history. Historically, capes such as the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Horn have been markers of exploration and global trade, symbolizing human resilience and ambition during the Age of Discovery (Clark, 2006). These locations were pivotal in connecting distant regions, but they also represented peril, as their treacherous waters tested sailors' endurance.

In literature, capes are used metaphorically to signify boundaries, transitions, or existential challenges. Joseph Conrad’s *The Mirror of the Sea* portrays capes as formidable natural elements that demand respect and symbolize the interplay between human ambition and nature's indifference (Taylor, 2013). Similarly, in environmental narratives, capes often highlight the fragility of ecosystems at the edges of human expansion. For instance, Cape Cod is frequently referenced as an emblem of delicate environmental balance and the need for conservation (Steinberg, 2001).

From the analysis, it is demonstrated that in both Western and Chinese contexts, “the Cape” could symbolize geographic remoteness, exoticism, and a connection to the natural world, but its thematic resonance differs depending on cultural frameworks. “The Cape” is a remote, almost mythical place, representing Joe’s emotional desire and spiritual transcendence rather than conquest and sensory richness in English.The translation of “**海角**” (hǎijiǎo) as “the Cape” filters its inherent meaning embedded in Chinese, which in turn affects the reader's understanding of the thematic meaning of the original text.

In the original text, Joe’s contemplation of “海角”hǎijiǎo (The Cape) aligns with *The Last Lover*’s themes of searching existence, separation and the interconnection between reality and imagination. “海角” hǎijiǎo (The Cape) demonstrates Joe’s internal conflicts, navigating the boundaries between the physial and the mental, the known and the unknown.

This translation choice underscores the challenges inherent in adapting culturally specific terms. By filtering “**海角**” into “the Cape”, the translator ensures accessibility but

reduces the poetic and symbolic layers that contribute to the depth of the source text. This process highlights the trade-off in literary translation: while cultural filtering makes the text more approachable to the target audience, it often diminishes the cultural richness and emotional complexity of the original. As a result, the translation achieves readability but risks losing the intricate cultural nuances that define the literary identity of the source text.

Case 2

ST: 我去过那种地方，我说的是荒野里的一间茅屋，站在门口，就可以看见附近的山上烧起的野火。这种事你得好好考虑到底，不要因为公司少不了你就放弃考虑。（《最后的情人》）

TT: I've been to places like that. I mean a thatched hut in the wilderness, and from its doorway you can see the mountaintops burned by wildfires. (*The Last Lover*)

This is what Vencent, Joe's boss, said to Joe. The symbolic meaning of "茅屋"("thatched hut"), and "野火" (wildfire) carries profound thematic meanings that contribute to the novel's broader exploration of existential, psychological, and cultural themes. These elements resonate with the surreal, symbolic, and introspective nature of the novel.

There are notable cultural nuances in the translation of "茅屋" and "野火" into "a thatched hut" and "wildfires" respectively. These terms carry cultural and contextual layers in the source text (ST) that may be adjusted or interpreted differently in the target text.

The term "茅屋" (máo wū) holds significant cultural and historical meaning in Chinese literature and everyday life. It frequently brings to mind simplicity, modesty, and nature, recalling classical texts such as Tao Yuanming's "五柳先生传" (The Five Willows Gentleman) and "归园田居" (Returning to the Countryside), which celebrate a simple, rural way of living. Associated with classical Chinese literature and poetry, such as Du Fu's famous poem "茅屋为秋风所破歌" (The Song of My Thatched Hut Wrecked by Autumn Winds), which carries deep cultural and historical resonance. "茅屋" can mean simplicity and strength, usually related to countryside living or stepping back from everyday life. It has a poetic idea of being near nature and living well with it.

"A thatched hut", in English, conveys a similarly rustic dwelling but may lack the historical and cultural weight of "茅屋" (máo wū) in Chinese culture. English readers may imagine a quaint, pastoral hut, but they might not perceive the same depth of hardship or poetic resonance.

So we can find that the Chinese term, "茅屋" (máo wū), suggests a literary, philosophical richness associated with simplicity and harmony with nature. It symbolizes a retreat or refuge, a place where one can strip away the layers of societal expectations and connect with their inner self. The simplicity of "茅屋" (máo wū) underscores themes of introspection and a return to essential truths. The English term emphasizes physical description without so many layers.

"**野火**" (yě huǒ) in Chinese, implies natural blows of fire without control, and it often appears in classical poetry. For example, in Bai Juyi's line, "**野火**烧不尽，春风吹又生" (The wildfires cannot consume [the grass]; spring winds blow, and it grows again), "**野火**" (yě huǒ) symbolizes both destruction and renewal. It might have poetic resonances of cyclical natural processes or human plight."

In English, "wildfires" foregrounds fires as something that is inherently destructive, especially when it comes to their role in the context of forest fires, as is typically represented in environmental or survival narratives. Wildfires have long been associated with chaos or beginnings in Western culture. For some Chinese people, however, they could be seen more practically, as a type of natural event that places a bet with elements of danger and awe, possibly connected with Chinese Daoist beliefs that balance between ruin and growth.
It lacks the cyclical or philosophical undertones of "**野火**" (yě huǒ)in Chinese poetry. So we can find that the English "wildfires" focuses more on the physical phenomenon and less on the symbolic layers present in "**野火**"(yě huǒ) within the Chinese context.

This analysis underscores the inherent challenges in literary translation, where words are laden with cultural, historical, and emotional significance. Translators must make conscious decisions about how to convey these elements, recognizing that some loss of nuance is almost inevitable. The goal is to strike a balance where the translated text resonates with the target audience without veering too far from the author's original intent.

Understanding and applying cultural schemas enable translators to anticipate how readers might interpret certain terms based on their cultural backgrounds. By thoughtfully considering these schemas, translators can choose words and phrases that evoke similar feelings and ideas, even if they are not exact equivalents. This requires not only linguistic proficiency but also deep cultural insight into both the source and target languages.

The translation of culturally rich terms like "**茅屋**" and "**野火**"(yě huǒ) exemplifies the complexities of cross-cultural communication in literature. While cultural filtering facilitates reader comprehension, it also poses the risk of oversimplifying or altering nuanced meanings. Translators play a pivotal role in bridging cultural gaps, and their choices significantly influence how a work is perceived and appreciated by new audiences. Achieving fidelity to the source text while making it accessible requires careful negotiation

of linguistic and cultural differences, highlighting the translator's artistry and responsibility in bringing literature to a global readership.

Case 3

ST: 乔的妻子玛丽亚正在编织机上织挂毯，那是她的爱好，也是她用来补贴家用的技艺，周围的邻居家都挂着她的工艺品。（《最后的情人》）

TT: Joe's wife, Maria, was at her loom weaving a tapestry. It was her favorite pastime, and also a means of supplementing the household income. Almost all the homes in the neighborhood had samples of her handiwork hanging in them. (*The Last Lover*)

The cultural nuances in the representation of themes in *The Last Lover* between "毯" (guà tǎn) and "tapestry" reveal deeper layers of meaning tied to identity, labor and artistic expression. In the novel's exploration of love, memory and cross-cultural relationships. "挂毯" (guà tǎn) in the Chinese context evokes images of practicality and domestic industriousness, reflecting Maria's role in supplementing household income through a skill-based craft. It aligns with traditional Chinese values of thrift, resourcefulness, and the intertwining of art and labor. "挂毯"(guà tǎn) often features Chinese traditional or folk motifs, reinforcing connections to heritage, community, and identity. Tapestry in Western culture often connotes luxury, artistry, and historical grandeur. The English term places Maria's work in a more artistic or decorative domain, subtly shifting the focus from her domestic labor to her creativity. In *The Last Lover*, the nuanced difference between labor as necessity (挂毯) and labor as art（tapestry）touches on the tension between survival and self-expression, reflecting the novel's exploration of characters' internal conflicts an their relationships with external world.

"挂毯"(guà tǎn) often features Chinese traditional or folk motifs, reinforcing connections to heritage, community, and identity. The act of weaving "挂毯" (guà tǎn) could metaphorically signify Maria's effort to bind her fragmented existence in a foreign or estranged setting. Tapestry, as a Westernized equivalent, implies a more universal or non-specific cultural artifact. While it resonates with global readers, it risks losing the culturally embedded significance of "挂毯" (guà tǎn), which might symbolize localized identity in the original Chinese text.

The Last Lover delves into the blurred boundaries of identity in a globalized world. By choosing "tapestry," the translation leans into universality, potentially diluting the cultural specificity that defines Maria's world. As argued by Eoyang (2003) in "Cultural Translation: The Other Language," such translational choices can mediate between cultural

specificity and global accessibility, but they also risk oversimplifying or generalizing cultural artifacts.

In Chinese culture, "挂毯" (guà tǎn) may embody memory and storytelling through its motifs and designs, often inspired by life experiences or traditional narratives. The loom becomes a metaphor for weaving personal and collective histories. Maria's weaving in *The Last Lover* mirrors the novel's fragmented, surreal narrative structure, where memory and reality intertwine. The choice of "tapestry" may inadvertently align Maria's craft with Western storytelling traditions rather than the deeply personal and idiosyncratic themes central to Can Xue's writing. Lau's (2019) essay, "Narrative Fractures in Can Xue," emphasizes the symbolic weight of crafts like weaving in Can Xue's novels, serving as metaphors for characters' attempts to reconcile fragmented identities and histories.
"挂毯" (guà tǎn) in the original text reflects Maria's relationship with her neighbors, as her handiwork connects her to the surrounding community. It emphasizes the relational and spatial aspects of her craft, which extend beyond the domestic sphere.Tapestry in English evokes a more individualistic and artistic sense of creation, possibly detaching Maria's craft from its community-oriented roots. *The Last Lover* explores themes of disconnection and relationality in a surreal, disorienting world. The cultural nuance of "挂毯" (guà tǎn) reinforces Maria's tangible connections to her environment, contrasting with the alienation pervasive in other parts of the novel. Chen's (2015) "Interpreting Space in Can Xue" underscores how spatial metaphors in Can Xue's work reflect the characters' relationships with their physical and emotional surroundings, suggesting that "挂毯" (guà tǎn) anchors Maria within her spatial reality.

The translation of "挂毯" (guà tǎn) as "tapestry" highlights broader issues in cross-cultural representation. While it ensures accessibility to English-speaking readers, it shifts the thematic nuances from practicality, relationality, and cultural specificity to artistry and universalism. This translational choice has implications for how the novel's core themes—labor, memory, identity, and connection—are interpreted by different audiences.

4. The Translator's Role

The role of the translator in *The Last Lover* is intricately tied to the concept of cultural schemas, a framework that examines how shared cultural knowledge and cognitive structures inform language and meaning. Cultural schemas, as defined by Sharifian (2017), refer to the collective mental structures that shape how members of a culture interpret experiences, symbols, and narratives. Translating a work as symbolically dense and avant-garde as Can Xue's *The Last Lover* demands more than linguistic proficiency; it requires an understanding of the cultural schemas embedded in the text and a strategic approach to rendering those schemas accessible in the target language. The study found that while universal symbols, such as light and darkness, ostensibly retained thematic coherence in translation, deeper layers of culturally specific symbolism were often lost, significantly impacting readers' interpretations of the text's avant-garde themes. This highlights the

translator's dual challenge of preserving the symbolic integrity of the source text while adapting it to align with the target audience's cultural schemas.

Can Xue's use of symbols is deeply rooted in Chinese cultural schemas, which are informed by philosophical traditions. These symbols carry profound cultural meanings in Chinese thought, where they often represent the interconnectedness of life, nature, and the cosmos. Translating these symbols requires the translator to navigate between retaining their cultural specificity and adapting them to the cognitive frameworks of the target audience. Failure to adequately convey these cultural schemas risks diminishing the symbolic depth of the text and, consequently, the reader's engagement with its deeper themes.

The translator's role is further complicated by the interplay between culturally specific and universal schemas. While some symbols in *The Last Lover*—such as "cape"—might seem universally resonant, their function and interpretation are often shaped by the source culture's schemas. A translator must grapple with the challenge of rendering the culturally nuanced symbolism intelligible to a target audience whose cultural schemas surrounding capes may differ significantly. As Sharifian (2017) points out, the translator's task involves not just linguistic transfer but also the interpretation and adaptation of cultural schemas to ensure that the translated text retains its thematic and symbolic coherence.

The loss of deeper symbolic layers during translation, as identified in the study, often arises from the difficulty of conveying culture-specific schemas in a way that resonates with the target audience. Translators must navigate the interpretive divergences, deciding whether to retain the source culture's schemas, adapt them to the target culture's conceptual frameworks, or provide additional context to guide the reader's interpretation.

The translator's role extends beyond linguistic and cultural mediation to shaping the reader's experience of the text. By interpreting and adapting the cultural schemas embedded in *The Last Lover*, the translator influences how readers engage with the text's symbols and themes. This role is particularly critical in avant-garde fiction, where abstract symbols and unconventional narrative structures challenge readers to actively interpret and construct meaning. As the study highlights, the loss of culturally specific symbolism in translation can significantly impact the depth and richness of readers' interpretations, underscoring the importance of the translator's sensitivity to cultural schemas.

The translator's role in *The Last Lover*, viewed through the lens of cultural schemas, is one of creative interpretation and cultural mediation. By engaging with the cultural schemas that inform the text's symbolism, translators can preserve its thematic and symbolic depth while ensuring its accessibility to a new audience. While some loss of culturally specific meaning is inevitable, the translator's efforts to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps ensure that Can Xue's avant-garde narrative continues to resonate across cultural boundaries. This process not only preserves the artistic integrity of the text but also fosters a richer dialogue between cultures, highlighting the transformative potential of translation as an act of cultural exchange.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal that while the universal symbols, "海角" (cape) , '茅屋 ("thatched hut"), "野火" ("wildfire") and "挂毯" ("tapestry") in Can Xue's *The Last Lover* often retain thematic coherence in translation, the nuanced layers of culturally specific symbolism embedded in the original language are frequently lost. This phenomenon has significant implications for the reader's interpretation of the text's avant-garde themes and highlights the challenges translators face when attempting to render culture-specific or abstract symbols intelligible in a different linguistic and cultural context.

To preserve the avant-garde characteristics of *The Last Lover*, translator Annelise Finegan Wasmoen chose to translate everything without offering explicit explanations, prioritizing foreignization over domestication. This approach allows readers greater interpretive freedom, providing space to explore the novel's symbolic and thematic significance. However, symbols laden with culture-specific schemas demand careful consideration, as strict fidelity to the source text may result in a loss of deeper meaning for readers unfamiliar with the cultural context. This study highlights the challenges inherent in conveying such schemas across linguistic and cultural boundaries.The translator's role is an act of cultural mediation that requires sensitivity to the source text's cultural schemas and creativity in adapting them for the target audience. It also illustrates the crucial role translators play in navigating these challenges and the importance of what translation strategies translators employ to ensure that the symbolic depth of avant-garde literature is preserved as much as possible in the target language. By interpreting and preserving the cultural schemas embedded in the text, translators can foster a richer dialogue between cultures, allowing readers to engage with the universal and particular aspects of the novel. Ultimately, successful translation necessitates a delicate balance—acknowledging cultural differences while preserving the universal themes and symbolic intricacies that define the literary artistry of works like *The Last Lover*.

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Notes: Tao Yuanming (**陶渊明**; also Tao Qian**陶潜**), one of the greatest poets and essayists in Chinese history. His compositions are full of philosophy and culture, among which his famous works "**五柳先生**传" (The Five Willows Gentleman) and "归园田居" (Returning to the Countryside), especially reveals the poet's craving for natural rural life.

Exploitation of Construal Operations in the Analysis of Descriptive Poetry

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Abstract

One of the most fundamental properties of a beautiful portrait is the accuracy of showing more details of the scene. The skillful painter is that who has the ability to reflect the scene with all its details in their portrait. The skillful poet is a skillful painter but with words rather than paints. In a descriptive poem, the poet depicts a scene with most of its details as if the listener or reader sees it. This area of poetry has not received sophisticated studies within a linguistic framework, so the current study comes to contribute to this field. Cognitive linguistics is an appropriate field that can provide workable tools of analysis because its theses, specially embodiment, have great deal with how reality will be reflected in language and cognition. This paper aims to formulate a model to analyze such kind of poetry. It adopts, with minor modification, Langaker's construal principles to analyze Ibn Hisn's Poem 'The Dove'. These principles are mainly oriented to how the human beings conceptualize reality, especially the visual environment. The current study arrives at a conclusion that the poem, the dove, is highly descriptive in its all aspects. It sticks to a single scene in which all the tackled scopes belong to a single general scope. The poet gives details about the major concepts being described and draws nearly all the small parts of the view which represent a high degree of resolution.

***Keywords*:** Construal Operations, Descriptive Poetry, Cognitive Grammar

1. Introduction

One of the main types of poetry is the descriptive poetry (DP). One of the landmarks of this type is its relationship with the visual environment. The poet tries to convey more details about a scene in a poetic way. It seems the classical linguistic tools are not enough to analyze the poem from this perspective. Recently, Cognitive Grammar (CG) has provided the field of linguistics with a new perspective by relating language to all other human cognitive activities and faculties. One of the cores in CG is how the human being construe and conceptualize reality, especially the visual reality. This area of poetry has not received sophisticated studies within a linguistic framework, so the current study comes to contribute to this field. Cognitive linguistics is an appropriate field that can provide workable tools of analysis because its theses, specially embodiment, have great deal with how reality will be reflected in language and cognition. This paper aims to formulate a model to analyze such kind of poetry. The descriptive poem, *the dove*, from the Andalusian poetry will be analyzed in this study as an example.

The study can be based on the following questions: (1) How can construal operations be exploited as analytical tools for DP? (2) What are the most prominent and workable operations that can be employed in this context? (3) What are the main aspects of the Dove poem that reflect its descriptivability. The current paper aims to build a bridge between CG and DP through the construal principles in order to show how descrptive poets can reflect the detailed scenes in their poems. The paper suggests a model of analysis as a tool for

analyzing DP by employing and redefining the principles of construal. It consists of four steps. The first step is *Elaboration* which measures the ability of the poet to specify the described entity by giving more details about it. Second, *Resolution* is this step which is about how the poet depicts the small and accurate parts of the scene. Third, *Focal Adjustment* is the step which tackles whether the poet covers all the scene through his description. The last step is *Relatedness* in which the poet gauges the unity of the poem subject. All of these steps group to estimate to which extent the poem is descriptive. These steps are applied to a descriptive poem, *the dove*, from the Andalusian poetry.

2. Construal in Cognitive Grammar

Cognitive Grammar (CG) is one of the grammars that have abandoned the classical way of thinking about language. It has omitted all the traditional boundaries between language components and language and other aspects of cognition. It is pioneered by Langacker (1987, 1988, 1991a, 1991b, 1999, 2002 and 2008). One of the central aspects of this grammar is *construal*. Evans (2007: 40-1) defines construal as the way that the speaker chooses to encode conceptual representation by language. Utterances in turn evoke consequences in the hearer's mind for the conceptual representation. Achievement of this process passes through a specific "focal adjustment" and "organizing" the conceptualized scene, linguistically, in a particular way. For instance, the differences between the active and passive constructions regarding 'focus'. The active construction draws the attention to the agent, while the passive concentrates on the patient. The two constructions construe the same scene differently. Croft and Cruse (2004: 103) mentions that "it is by means of a series of processes of construal that an essentially non-semantic purport is transformed into fully contextualized meanings." Meaning of an expression is not only a matter of evoking conceptual content, but also the way of construing that content.

Lanacker (2008: 55-85) indicates that construing a scene depends on four aspects. First, the closeness between the conceptualizer and the scene; he uses the term *specificity* for this aspect. Second, which part of the scene the viewer chooses to look at, *focus*. Third, to which element in the scene the conceptualizer pays more attention, *prominence*. Fourth, the point from which the viewer looks, *perspective*. Langacker explains specificity in terms of *schematicity* and *granularity*. Schematicity refers to a general description of a situation while granularity indicates more specific or detailed description. For example, *temperature* and *rat* can be described schematically as *hot* and rodent, and in terms of granularity, as *95 degrees* (or more specific *95,2 degrees*) and *large brown rat*.

Croft and Cruse (2004: 103) present focusing in terms of *foreground* vs. *background* and *scope* which are categorized within the concept of *selection*. In construing a scene, specific elements are foregrounded and others are backgrounded. On the other hand, the concept of 'scope' can be understood through of two aspects of selection. First, any chosen expression provides access to specific domains or scopes. Second, within a given scope, the selected expression highlights a particular area. For instance, the word *elbow* grants access to the broader domain of human body. However, it is clear that this word is not defined by

the general domain as a whole. Instead, within that domain, the word primarily relates to the arm.

Langacker (2008) assumes that focusing is closely linked to, and can be analyzed through, the concept of *prominence*. Prominence is explained in terms of *profiling* and *trajector and landmark alignment*. An expression highlights a specific area of the conceptual content, which forms the foundation of its meaning. Langacker refers to this highlighted area as the *base*. The base represents the direct domain accessed by the expression within the broader activated domain. Within the base, focus is directed to a particular part, known as the *profile*. For example, the word *elbow* activates the general domain of the human body, which serves as its maximal domain. From this domain, the word selects a specific scope—*the arm*—as the base for its meaning. Within this scope, *elbow* profiles or refers to a very specific part. Profiling is not limited to nouns but also applies to verbs, relationships, and other linguistic elements. Prominence plays a key role in profiling relationships, where participants are distinguished by varying degrees of prominence. One participant, known as the trajector (TR), is more prominent than the other, referred to as the landmark (LM). The classification of participants as TR or LM depends on *focal prominence*, whether primary or secondary, rather than on their semantic roles.

The final aspect of construal is *perspective*, which refers to the viewpoint from which the conceptualizer interprets a scene. This is a feature of *focal adjustment*. According to Evans and Green (2006: 541), the viewpoint from which a scene is construed is linked to the prominence of its elements. Langacker (2008) explains that grammatical functions, such as subject and object, reflect perspective and have a conceptual foundation. The subject is described as an "active energy source (AGENT)," transferring energy to the object, which is characterized as "an energy sink (PATIENT)." The subject is often considered the trajector (TR) because it is dynamic, while the object is regarded as the landmark (LM) due to its static and stationary nature. However, the classification of TR (subject) and LM (object) depends on perspective. For instance, in passive sentences, where the perspective shifts, the object becomes the TR, and the subject takes on the role of the LM.

3. A Construal Based Model

Recent studies, such as Harrison et al. (2014), have utilized aspects of cognitive grammar to analyze literary texts. This approach aligns with that trend but incorporates some distinctions. It is specifically designed to assess descriptive potential (DP) in poetry, evaluating the extent to which a poem is descriptive. The model is rooted in Langacker's cognitive grammar, particularly the concept of "construal." It outlines four analytical steps, each examining the poem from a unique perspective, yet ultimately working towards a unified objective.

3.1. Elaboration

This step is grounded in Langacker's construal aspect of "specificity." At times, a poet may depict a scene using general or schematic characteristics. Such descriptions are less likely to capture the reader's or listener's attention, as a scene described in vague terms tends to appear

indistinct. The more detailed a poem is, the more engaging it becomes. A poem is considered more descriptive when it provides richer details about the entity being portrayed. Even within a single poem, some lines may be more descriptive than others. For instance, a poet might describe a *summer night* simply as a *warm night*. This can be expanded to include elaborated details, such as a *moonlit warm night*. Further elaboration could describe it as a *moonlit worm night where sky is full with stars and the spread smooth stones reflect moonbeams*.

Poets often use some linguistic and conceptual tools, such as similes and metaphors, to provide more precise descriptions. Describing something in terms of another or drawing similarities between the features of two entities helps clarify the subject or idea the poet seeks to convey. This is particularly effective when discussing abstract concepts by relating them to concrete ones. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) explain that people tend to understand abstract ideas through concrete or physical experiences, as the latter are more specific and clearly defined. Employing metaphors and similes not only enhances clarity but also reduces the need for extensive descriptive language, as they effectively convey multiple features of the concept being described.

3.2. Resolution

The term "resolution" originates from computer science, where it refers to the ability of a screen to display a clear image based on the size and number of pixels in a photo. In this context, the concept is closely tied to the previous step and is derived from Langacker's idea of "profiling." A highly descriptive poem tends to focus on finer and more precise details. Profiling involves highlighting specific areas within a broader domain, as illustrated by the example of "elbow" in the earlier section. Here, the focus is on whether the poem's expressions capture both small details and larger elements of the scene. The descriptions of the *summer night* in the previous step exemplify profiling by addressing both broad and minute aspects of the scene. For instance, the word *stone* highlights a small part within the larger domain of *ground*. Similarly, *moonbeam* activates the maximal domain of the *sky* and narrows it down to the *moon* as its intermediate base, ultimately profiling the specific part *beam* within that domain.

3.3. Focal Adjustment

Filming a scene requires the cameraman to shift the camera from one part of the scene to another to capture all its details. Similarly, the poet acts as a cameraman, but instead of using a camera, they use words. The poet transitions from describing one area to another within the real or imagined view they are exploring or envisioning. A poem becomes more descriptive when it encompasses a greater number of sub-scenes. This step draws on Langacker’s concept of "perspective," as explained earlier. The process of focal adjustment, or shifting from one part to another, can be observed through changes in the trajector (TR) and landmark (LM). Since the TR is the most prominent element in a sentence, tracking it allows one to follow shifts in focus. The relationship between TR and LM typically aligns with that of doer and patient, subject and object, or subject and predicate. In the previous example *where sky is full with stars and the spread smooth stones reflect moonbeams*, the

first clause positions *the sky* as the TR and the stars as the LM. The poet then transitions to a new sub-scene in the next clause, where the TR shifts to *stones* and the LM becomes *moonbeams*, illustrating the movement of focus within the scene.

3.4. Relatedness

This step builds on Langacker's concept of "scope" and examines the unity of the poem's subject. To describe something effectively, a poet must maintain focus on it. A more descriptive poem remains centered on a general scene, with its lines portraying different aspects of that scene. The overarching topic of the poem activates a primary scope, while individual expressions or groups of expressions activate specific sub-scopes. This step assesses the connections between these activated scopes and their relation to the maximal scope of the poem's main topic. When the scopes are interconnected, it shows that the poet is concentrating on a single general scene, resulting in a more precise description. In the example of *the summer night*, the scopes activated by expressions such as moonlit, *warm night*, *sky*, *stars*, and *moonbeams* are clearly related to one another and collectively link back to the maximal scope of *the summer night*.

4. Data Description: Ibn Hisn's Poem "The Dove"

Abu'l Hasan 'Ali ibn Hisn is an Arab poet from Seville lived in the 11th century. He is one of the pioneers of the Andalusian DP. In his poem "The Dove" he follows many Arab poets in imagining the dove's cooing as if the dove cries because of the longing for a beloved. The dove in this poem reflects the poet's situation in missing his beloved. This poem is translated by Middleton & Garza-Falcón (1993).

The Dove The surprise of my life: On a bough between Isle and river a dove Cooing, his collar Pistache green, lapis his breast, Neck shimmering and maroon His back and wingtips. Pupils of ruby, over them eyelids Of pearl flitted, trimmed with gold, Black the point Of his beak, like The tip of a reed Dipped in ink. On the arak bough, His throne, throat now hid In the fold of a wing, he rested. But he saw me weep. Scared by a sob On the bough he stood, Spread wings, beat them, Took as he flew my heart away. Where? I know not.	**الحمام** **وما هاجني إلا ابـن ورقـاء هاتف** **على فنن بين الجزيـــرة والنـهر** **مفستق طـــوق لازورد كلكل** **موشى الطلى أحوى القوادم والظهر** **أدار على اليـــاقوت أجفان لؤلؤ** **وصاغ على الأجفان طوقاً من التبر** **حديد شبا المنـــقار داج كأنه** **شبا قلم من فضـــة مد في حبر** **توسد من فـــرع الأراك أريكة** **ومال على طي الجنـــاح مع النحر** **ولما رأى دمعي مـــراقاً أرابـه** **بكائي فاستـولى على الغصن النضر** **وحث جناحيـــه وصفق طائراً** **وطار بقلبي حيـث طار ولا أدري**

5. Data Analysis: The Construal Operations of Ibn Hisn's Poem "The Dove"

5.1. Elaboration

In the first line the poet describes the position of the dove. He uses two prepositional phrases, *on a bough* and *between Isle and river*, as modifiers which specify its position precisely. Unlike the previous description of position, the situation of *cooing* is not described. This may be justified by the focus on the visual scene. In the second line, the poet describes the bird's color with some details involving all its body parts, because color is a prominent feature in doves. Its collar is not only *green*, the green is more specified by *pistache*. Its *breast* is also characterized by an accurate color, *lapis*. Its *neck* is depicted by being *shimmering* and its *back* and *wingtips* are *maroon*. In the third line, he continues his description by using two metaphors, *Pupils of ruby* and *eyelids Of pearl.* These metaphors compensate for many descriptive words by giving the precise shape and color of *pupils* and *eyelids*. In addition to the metaphor, *eyelids* are modified by other three modifiers that give more details about them, *flitted, trimmed* and *with gold*. The poet, then, looks at another area, the *beak* by describing its tip with a simile. Through the simile he gives two expressions as modifiers, *Like the tip of a reed* and *Dipped in ink*. Actually, this is a high level of providing details.

In the fifth line, the poet portraits the bird's body mode through three expressions: *throat now hid, in the fold of a wing* and *he rested*. The first two expressions depict accurately how the bird sits in which it is easy to the reader to imagine the situation where its throat is covered by the wing. In the third expression the poet concludes from the previous expressions that the bird is safe and comfortable. The poet situation is characterized or modified only by one verb, *weep*. But the bird's situation is reflected by rich details. It is *scared* because of the poet and this general term, *scare*, is revealed by a more specific term, *a sob*. Therefore, the dove decides to fly and the poem draws all its movements by four expressions, *on the bough, he stood, Spread wings* and *beat them*. One can conclude that the poem is rich with details in which the most terms are specified by different kinds of modifiers regarding the visual properties of the scene, as it is shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 The general concepts of the poem and their modifiers

General concept		Modifier 1	Modifier 2	Modifier 3	Modifier 4
The dove's position		On a bough	Between Isle and river a dove	On the arak bough	
cooing		Ø			
The bird's color	collar	pistache	green		
	breast	lapis			
	Neck	shimmering			
	Its back and wingtips	maroon			
Pupils		ruby			
eyelids		of pearl	flitted	trimmed	with gold
Beak		Black the point of his beak,	Like the tip of a reed	Dipped in ink	
The bird's body mode		throat now hid	In the fold of a wing,	he rested.	
The poet		weep			
When the bird saw the poet		Scared	by a sob		
The bird's movement		On the bough	he stood	Spread wings	beat them

5.2. Resolution

In terms of resolution, it is easy to see that although the whole scene is so limited, the poet shows many small details. This is so clear through the words that profile very small details in the scene. The poem contains words like *collar*, *breast*, *neck*, *back*, *wingtips*, *pupils*, *eyelids*, *beak*, *throat*, *the fold of a wing*. All of these nouns and noun phrases profile small parts within the domain of the bird's body. Within these small parts of the scene, the poet gives more resolution by stating the noun phrases, *black the point of his beak* and *the tip of a reed*, which profile a very small area in the domain of *beak*. The poem also includes some words or phrases that profile very accurate activities, such as *cooing*, *flitted*, *sob*, *dipped in ink* and *beat them*. It seems that this poem profiles many accurate or small areas and activities of the view. This means the high level of description the poem has.

5.3. Focal Adjustment

The scene consists of a natural setting in which a dove sits and a descriptor, the poet. The poem words will be the camera that shows the scene and the change in the TR and LM represent its moving. The poet starts with a panoramic view which consists of the dove as the TR because it is the most prominent entity and it is the doer that is modified by two prepositional phrases, *on a bough between* and *Isle and river*. The poet represents, the patient, the LM which fads as a background of the scene. After this panoramic view, the

camera moves rapidly to film many sub-scenes. In the next sentence the TR changes to be *his collar* which gives up its position because of the prominence of *his breast* (TR) in the following clause.

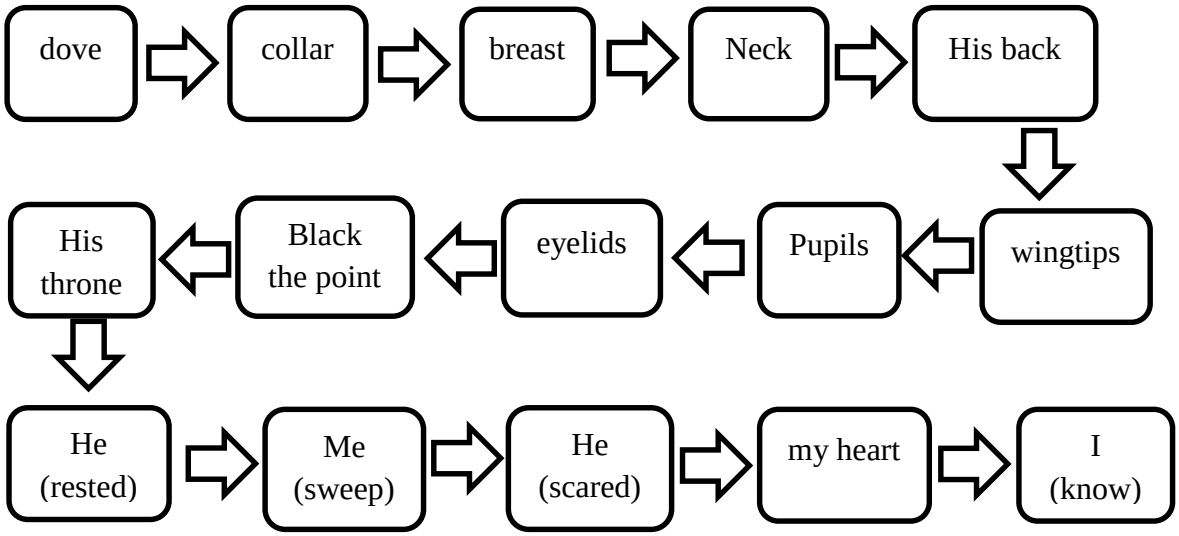

Figure 4.1 Tracing TR through the poem

It is better to continue tracing TR in a diagram, as in Figure 4.1. It is clear that this poem has a big number of sub-scenes which are reflected in the TR movements. This means that the descriptor shows all parts of the scene, therefore the poem is highly descriptive.

5.4. Relatedness

In terms of relatedness, it seems that the poem focuses on a single scene which consists of the dove and the poet in a natural context. The poet feels that he and the dove have the same feeling of sadness because of the departure of their beloved. Therefore, the main scopes of the poem, as in Figure 4.2, the scope of the descriptor (the poet), the scope of the descripted entity (the dove) and the point relationship between them (sadness). It is clear that all the sub-scopes are included

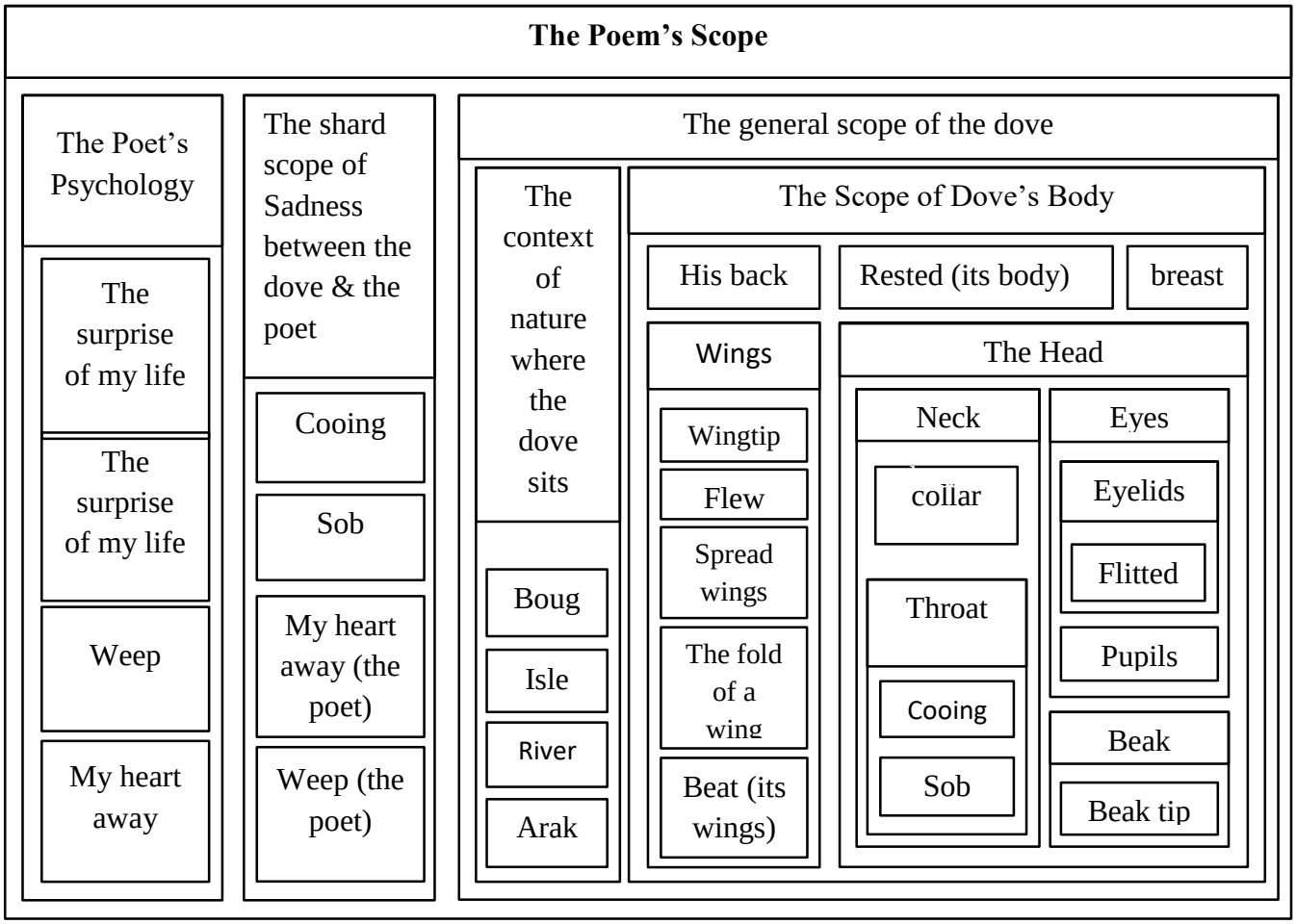

Figure 4.2 The Interrelated Scopes of the Poem

Within these three scopes. However, the majority of the sub-scenes are involved within the scope dove (the descripted entity) and this is required because it is the scene center. It seems that the poem has a high degree of relatedness and in turn highly descriptive.

6. Results and Discussion

The results show that the modal has integrated the four construal operations of cognitive grammar with some modifications and all of them have played central roles to tackle the poem from different sides. In terms of elaboration, the poet elaborated his scenes in the poem through extending them to include additional parts. In the Dove poem, the poet does not stop at describing the dove's shape, but enlarge the scene to involve its position, its feelings, and other related concepts. According to the resolution operations, all the parts of the scene are mentioned with many small details. In other words, the poet zooms the scene with all its details. The focal adjustment operation shows that the poem imagines the whole scene and because of the focus or zooming the poet moves from one part to another within the scene. The last operation indicates that all the concepts relate to each other in different ways from the right beginning of the poem lintel the end.

7. Conclusions

The conclusion is divided into two parts, the first is related to the model itself and the second to the poem, they are:

1. The model reflects the applicability of Cognitive Grammar to literature, especially DP. The principles of construal can play a good role in analyzing Descriptive Poetry, especially the visual environment of the descriptive poem.

2. The steps of the model reveal that the poem, the dove, is highly descriptive in its all aspects:

a. The poet gives details about the major concepts being described. This has given each individual concept an adequate degree of description and these individual descriptions collect to give an adequate general description.

b. He also draws nearly all the small parts of the view which represent a high degree of resolution, like the clear picture in which all small parts are obvious.

c. The description is not directed to one or two sub-scenes; the poem is in a continuous movement of the focus from the very beginning to the end. The poem covers the scene from different points of view.

d. The poem sticks to a single scene in which all the tackled scopes belong to a single general scope. This focus, on a single domain, satisfies the scene with description.

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Prerequisites for a Survey on the Social Representations of French in Iran

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Abstract
Iran is a non-French-speaking country, but French was once widely practiced as a second language and has influenced Iranian culture and language. French is taught at Iranian universities from undergraduate to doctoral degrees. This study aims to answer two research questions: (1) What linguistic and cultural connotations are most frequently associated with the French language and culture among Iranian researchers? (2) How do Iranian researchers perceive the French language and culture, particularly in terms of its relevance to education? Using discourse analysis, this study examines the semantic connotations of words in academic works by Iranian researchers specializing in French studies from 2013 to 2023. The analysis focuses on peer-reviewed articles and conference papers addressing French as a foreign language (FLE) and French language education in Iran. The study reveals that French is perceived as a challenging yet prestigious and valuable language. This study serves as a foundation for further research on the social representations of French in Iranian universities. The findings contribute to the field of sociolinguistics by emphasizing the role of linguistic and cultural representations in language education and policy-making in Iran.
***Keywords*:** Sociolinguistics, Social Representations, French Language Education, Discourse Analysis, Iran

1. Introduction

The term “Francophonie” (or “francophonie” in lowercase) is a multifaceted concept that unites countries and individuals sharing the French language (Erfurt, 2018). According to the International Organisation of La Francophonie (OIF), there are over 321 million French speakers worldwide. While Iran is not among the 88 member countries of the OIF, its history, culture, and language have been profoundly influenced by France and the French language. Several Iranian universities have been members of the Association of Francophone Universities (AUF). The sociolinguistic contact between France and Iran has been the subject of numerous studies, which can be grouped into two broad categories:

1- **Historical Relations**: Research on political, economic, cultural, and social relations between France and Iran during the 19th and 20th centuries.

2- **Language Education**: Studies addressing French as a foreign language (FLE) in Iran, including its teaching methodologies and challenges faced by teachers and learners.

This study examines the social representations of the French language and culture in Iranian academia, particularly through the academic works of Iranian researchers over the past decade. By analyzing the semantic connotations of words used in these works, this literature review seeks to understand how French is perceived in the Iranian academic context. The research addresses the following questions:

1. What linguistic and cultural connotations are most frequently associated with the French language and culture among Iranian researchers?
2. How do Iranian researchers perceive the French language and culture, particularly in terms of its relevance to education?

By focusing on these questions, this study contributes to the field of the sociolinguistics of language-culture contact. It clarifies the role of social representations in shaping language planning and policy in Iran. This study also aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the status of the Francophonie in Iranian academia. This research sets the stage for further research, including an emic survey on the social representations of French in Iran, which is part of my doctoral thesis.

To contextualize this study, key terms such as "social representations" and "sociolinguistic contact" must be clarified. Social representations are socially constructed and shared forms of knowledge that guide social behavior and communication within a social group (Jodelet, 1989: 53). In the context of language, sociolinguistic representations determine how individuals relate to a language, its uses and its speakers (Boyer, 2017). The concept of "sociolinguistic contact" emphasizes that language contact occurs when conditions of social contact allow it, and it highlights the connection between linguistic, cultural, and social factors (Agresti, 2016). This theoretical framework provides the foundation for studying how Iranian researchers represent French in their works.

While a wealth of research exists regarding historical relations and language education of French in Iran, there is a gap in understanding how Iranian researchers themselves represent French in their academic works. This study fills this gap by analyzing their research papers.

2. Theoretical Framework and Background

2.1. Historical Perspective

The historical relations between France and Iran provide an important context for understanding today's perceptions of the French language in Iran. Political and commercial relations between France and Iran date back to the 17th century. However, during this period, contacts between the two countries were largely limited to a small number of travelers, missionaries, and a few diplomats (Mokhberi, 2019). To trace the origins of "Iranian Francophonie," we must go back to the late 18th to early 19th century and the Qajar dynasty. This dynasty brought political stability to the country and pushed Iran towards modernity. It was during this period that the attention of foreign travelers, including the French, turned to Iran. As a result, many travelogues of this period contributed significantly to the knowledge of Iran and its culture abroad.

From the 19th century onward, more and more French texts were written about Iran, thanks to the efforts of French academics such as Jules Mohl, a diligent translator of Persian literature into French. These translations helped introduce this rich literary heritage to the French public. The intensification of cultural exchanges between France and Iran was accompanied by a fascination for Iranian culture in France at various levels. Many great

works of Persian literature and poetry have been translated into French, which has inspired some works by great writers such as Victor Hugo and André Gide (Djalili & Kellner, 2022). During this time, French held a prestigious status and was widely spoken among Iran's elite. It was the language of instruction at *Dar ol-Fonoun*, the country's first modern school. Additionally, French-language schools were established, and the Alliance Française operated in multiple Iranian cities. Furthermore, many Iranian students pursued their studies in France during this period, leading to the integration of numerous French words into the Persian language (Bertucat, 2019). French was the first foreign language taught in Iran before being supplanted by English after World War II (Moghaddam, 2019).
While an anti-Western current emerged in the last years of the Pahlavi dynasty, the Islamic Revolution of 1979 ended up marginalizing the French language and culture in Iran. Today, English and Arabic are the two mandatory foreign languages taught in schools in Iran, but French remains present at the university level.

This historical context shows the importance of France and the French language throughout history, and it is crucial for understanding how French is perceived today in Iran as a prestigious and important language.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in two key concepts and phenomena: sociolinguistic contact and social representations.

2.2.1. Sociolinguistic Contact

Language contact is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but a social one, shaped by the conditions of interaction between societies (Simonin &Wharton, 2013). Terms like "linguistic contact," "language contact," and "language in contact" (Weinreich, 1953) are common; they present languages as tangible, substantial entities. Languages are portrayed as active subjects, comparable to social actors, which transform through contact with one another-seemingly independently from societies. Therefore, we use the term "sociolinguistic contact" (Agresti, 2016): language contact arises from social interactions, highlighting the interconnectedness of linguistic, cultural, and social factors. In the context of Iran, the sociolinguistic contact between French and Persian has been influenced by historical, cultural, and educational factors.

2.2.2. Social Representations

Social representations are essential to sociolinguistic research on the relationship between the individual, society, and language. To study people's linguistic behavior, it is important to remember that it is not possible to study their linguistic behavior individually because "the individual is nothing without the society that invents him and provides him with a structured field for his actions, illusions, and destiny" (Rouquette & Rateau, 1998: 28). In the preface to *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1982), Émile Durkheim explicitly states, "social life is entirely made up of representations." It is through these representations, which are "guides for action" (Abric, 2011: 11), that we understand the world around us. Social representations are a form of knowledge, socially constructed and shared, and they contribute to the creation

of a common reality within a social group. In fact, social representations guide social behavior and communication (Jodelet, 1989: 53). This concept of representations plays a particularly important role in identity construction and explains how individuals act within society.

Sociolinguistic representations are part of social representations. Henry Boyer (2017:62) specifies that sociolinguistic representations determine how individuals relate to a language, its uses, and its speakers. For example, French may be perceived as a "prestigious" language due to its historical context and association with literature and diplomacy or as a "complex" language due to its complex grammar and phonetics. Social representations are associated with various concepts, such as opinion and attitude.

2.2.2.1. Opinion and Attitude

Opinions and attitudes are closely related to social representations. When we express our feelings or thoughts about a subject, we essentially express our opinions. An attitude is "a higher-order cognitive formation" (Rouquette & Rateau, 1998: 22) that influences our behaviors, ways of thinking, and perceptions of the world (Girandola & Fointiat, 2016). Rouquette & Rateau (1998:24) describe it as a "specific form of occurrence of a social representation or a combination of representations." In the Dictionary of Linguistics and Language Sciences published by Larousse, it is observed that "language attitudes refer to the collection of explicit or implicit opinions held by individuals or groups concerning the use of a particular language (Dubois et al., 2012: 57). An individual with a positive opinion of a language is more likely to choose to learn it as a second or third language. In the context of this study, Iranian researchers' opinions toward French may vary between admiration for its cultural prestige and frustration with its linguistic difficulty. These social representations, opinions, and attitudes are identifiable through a discourse analysis, which can reveal the underlying perceptions expressed in the written texts.

3. Methodology

3.1 Discourse Analysis

Discourse serves as the natural environment in which social representations are formed, expressed, and disseminated across society (Py, 2004). Therefore, by examining the semantic connotations and lexical choices employed by the authors, the discourse analysis can uncover their implicit or explicit opinions and attitudes toward the French language and culture.

Discourse is not individual. It is shaped and influenced by collective forces, going beyond individual speech (Mazière, 2005/2016: 9). Discourse is a product defined by the conditions in which it is produced and by the interpretation and meaning given to it by the analyst (*Ibid.*). A discourse does not only describe a preexisting reality but creates a representation of the reality that the writer/speaker wishes to share with the reader/listener. As a result, for most language specialists, to state a discourse is to aim to influence others. Consequently, the objective of a discourse is an attempt to influence others (Seignour, 2011). Discourse analysis is then an approach that allows us to study discourse in a precise way.

With discourse analysis established as the methodology for identifying social representations of French in Iranian academic works, the next step is to describe the process of gathering the data for this analysis.

3.2 Search Strategy

A vast and growing body of published research is available on the subject of this literature review: "French in Iran." The selection process was guided by a search strategy to ensure that the chosen studies were directly relevant to the research questions and objectives. Below is an explanation of the search strategy:

1. **Relevance to Research Objectives**: This paper focuses only on research addressing the issue of French as a foreign language in Iran, the teaching of this language, and the challenges faced by its teachers and learners. Specifically, articles were selected if they examined the representations of French and their influences on the teaching and learning process.
2. **Time Frame:** Articles published between 2013 and 2023 were selected to ensure that the literature review reflects recent trends in the social representations of French in Iran.
3. **Publication type and Quality:** The review exclusively considers studies from academic journals and conferences to ensure academic rigor and credibility.
4. **Authorship and Context:** Another inclusion criterion is selecting studies specifically published by Iranian researchers based in Iran, as these provide the most relevant insights into the perception of French in the Iranian context.

3.2.1. Databases

I consulted several academic databases to conduct a comprehensive literature review and find related articles.

1. **Google Scholar** was the primary database used for this study due to its extensive coverage of academic sources, including peer-reviewed articles, books, theses, and conference papers.
2. **CIVILICA** is a Publisher of Iranian conference papers and scientific journal articles. It is valuable for accessing research conducted by Iranian researchers, which is central to this study.
3. **JREF.ir (Journal Reference)** is a joint member of CIVILICA publications and focuses on Iranian academic journals.
4. **SID.ir (Scientific Information Database)** is one of the largest Iranian databases for scientific research, covering more than 821,000 journal papers.
5. **Ensani.ir** is a database specializing in humanities research. It provides access to more than 450,000 full-text scientific papers from more than 1,700 journals.

In addition to these databases, I used citation searching to identify relevant studies cited in the reference lists of sources.

3.2.2. Search Terms

The research objectives guided the selection of search terms, which focus on exploring the social representations of French in academic works by Iranian researchers. These keywords

are central to understanding perceptions of French in Iranian academia: "francophonie," "social representations," "French in Iran," "FLE (Français Langue Étrangère)," "French education in Iran," "French language," "learning French," "French in Iranian academia," and "Iranian perception of French."

I conducted searches in French, English, and Persian to ensure that no relevant studies were overlooked. This multilingual approach allowed me to access a diverse range of studies. While the majority of the studies on this subject are in French, I also included one study in English and one in Persian.

3.2.3. Selected Studies

Considering the vast number of studies on French in Iran, I initially selected articles based on title and abstract to remove irrelevant ones. Next, I read the full texts of the remaining studies to confirm their relevance. From the initial 46 articles identified through the search strategy, 12 were ultimately selected for this literature review. These 12 studies not only meet all the criteria of the search strategy but also provide insight into how French is represented from the perspective of the author. The articles are listed in Table 1.

	Title	Autour(s)	Year	Language
1	*Le rôle des représentations dans la formation des enseignants de FLE en Iran*	Ladan Ghafoori Parivash Safa Rouhollah Rahmatian	2015	French
2	Explicit grammar in FLE classes besides communicative methods	Nazita Azimi-Meibodi Zohreh Joozdani	2016	French
3	The impact of social representations on teaching of grammar in the courses of French as a foreign language in Iran	Akbar Abdollahi, Bita Hashemiannejad	2017	French
4	*Universel ou contextualisé : quel choix de manuels d'enseignement du FLE pour le système scolaire iranien ?*	Zahra Davarpanah Rouhollah Rahmatian Parivash Safa	2019	French
5	*L'alternance codique langue maternelle/langue étrangère (FLE) : stéréotypes et réalités d'un besoin pédagogique dans le contexte iranien*	Leila Shobeiry Nezhla Yabandeh	2020	French
6	A comparative Study of Three Languages (English, Persian and French) in Teaching French Grammar (Case Study, Frequency of Adverbs)	Milad Mahdavipour	2021	English

7	Educational usage of French Loanwords in Lesson Zero of French Methods	Rouhollah Rezapour, Fatemeh Khamoush	2022	Persian
8	*Analyses contrastives de l'orthographe française (L'enseignement du français en Iran)*	Allahshokr Assadollahi	2022	French
9	Motivations and Learning Attitudes Towards French among Iranian University Students	Hadisehalsadat Mousavi Matin Vesal	2022	French
10	*Facteurs affectant l'apprentissage de la grammaire*	Mahdi Afkhaminia Vahideh Nassirzadeh	2022	French
11	The exploitation of literary texts for the development of pragmatic competence of French learners in Iran	Seyedeh Yasamin Sajjadi Roya Letafati Mahmoud Reza Gashmardi Parivash Safa	2020	French
12	Reimagining the Teaching of French as a Foreign Language (FLE) in Post-Pandemic Iran: The Evolution of Pedagogical Practices in Hybrid Learning Spaces	Hadisehalsadat Mousavi Saber Mohseni	2023	French

Table 1. Selected studies

4. Studies Analysis

In this section, the data from the selected studies will be analyzed and interpreted based on the discourse analysis framework. All the studies analyzed here address the challenges and opportunities in teaching French as a Foreign Language (FLE) in Iran. There are similarities in how the articles approach the subject from different angles. For instance, several articles explore the impact of linguistic differences between Persian and French on learners' acquisition of French, especially in grammar and orthography learning (Assadollahi, 2022; Afkhaminia & Nassirzadeh, 2022; Shobeiry & Yabandeh, 2020). Some articles analyze the role of teacher training, the effectiveness of teaching methodologies, and pedagogical practices in the Iranian context (Abdollahi & Hashemiannejad, 2017; Rezapour & Khamoush, 2022; Mousavi & Mohseni 2023). Some studies highlighted the historical and contemporary significance of French in Iran, recognizing the importance of French culture and literature for Iranian learners (Mousavi & Vesal, 2022), its role in diplomatic relations, and academic pursuit (Mousavi & Mohseni, 2023).

Studies employ both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Qualitative data is gathered mainly through interviews, text and discourse analysis, and observations, to gain an in-depth understanding of specific subjects, while quantitative data is collected through surveys and questionnaires, to identify patterns and trends.

In the following sections, I will discuss words used by the authors to describe the French language and culture in the selected articles. They use a variety of adjectives, words, and phrases to describe French.

4.1. Key Semantic Themes

The studies highlight several recurring semantic themes used by researchers to describe the French language:

4.1.1. Difficulty and Complexity

A recurring theme in the analyzed studies is the perception of French as a difficult language to learn. For example, Ghafoori et al. (2015) describe French as a "difficult language to learn." Some of the challenges mentioned in this paper are the grammar and linguistic representations of French teachers, who view French grammar as a difficult system to teach. Similarly, Azimi-Meibodi & Joozdani (2016) highlight grammar as "*difficile*" (difficult), while Abdollahi & Hashemiannejad (2017) elaborate that French grammar is perceived as "*plus difficile et plus compliquée*" (more difficult and more complex) than other foreign languages. Shobeiry & Yabandeh (2020) further emphasize that French grammar and conjugation are "les vraies difficultés" (the real difficulty) of learning this language.

This perception extends beyond grammar. Studies by Mahdavipour (2021), Rezapour & Khamoush (2022), Assadollahi (2022), Mousavi & Vesal (2022), and Afkhaminia & Nassirzadeh (2022) also emphasize the challenges of French phonology and orthography. For instance, Assadollahi (2022) describes French orthography as difficult to Iranian learners due to its differences from Persian : "L'enseignement du français, surtout la grammaire et l'orthographe pour les étudiants iraniens, semble être confortées à des problèmes cruciaux dus à la fois à la structure de la langue de départ, le persan, qui a ses propres caractéristiques syntaxiques, phonétiquesi…" (the teaching of French, particularly grammar and spelling for Iranian students, appears to face significant challenges due to the structure of Persian, which has its own syntactic and phonetic characteristics). These findings suggest that the perception of French as an intellectually demanding language is a significant barrier for Iranian learners, influencing teaching methodologies and student motivation.

4.1.2. Beauty

French is also described as a beautiful and pleasant language despite its perceived difficulty. Assadolahi (2022) characterizes French as a musical language: " Étant une langue qui a un aspect musical et d'harmonie, le français possède une bonne source homophonique " (as a language with a musical and harmonious quality, French possesses a rich source of homophony). These descriptions suggest a cultural admiration for French, which may serve as a motivation for learners. For example, in Ghafoori et al. (2015), 22% of participants in a survey on the teachers' representations of French described it as "une belle langue à entendre et à parler" (a beautiful language to hear and speak). Such descriptions show how the aesthetic qualities contribute to the language education.

4.1.3. Utility

Another theme is the practical utility of French. Azimi-Meibodi & Joozdani (2016) describe French as a skill to find a job : "les apprenants apprennent le FLE non pas par intérêt

personnel ou passe-temps mais plutôt comme une discipline universitaire leur servant plus tard à trouver un métier : d'où la nécessité d'une bonne maîtrise du français" (students learn French not for personal interest or as a hobby, but rather as an academic discipline that will later help them secure a job. This highlights the importance of mastering the French language effectively). Similarly, Mahdavipour (2021) emphasizes the role of French in "the dissemination of science, awareness, knowledge, and technology in the world," portraying it as a "widespread and effective language" and a useful tool for professional advancement. This theme is further supported by Mousavi & Vesal (2022), who note that students are motivated to learn French for employment opportunities and travel. For instance, 5 students remarked "je pense que parler français sera un avantage dans ma carrière ; j'aimerais voyager en France ; dans mon domaine, parler français est un atout. "

Moreover, Mousavi & Mohseni (2023) highlight the diplomatic and commercial significance of French in the world, stating that French "en tant que langue internationale de diplomatie et de commerce, détient une importance particulière" (as an international language of diplomacy and commerce, it holds particular importance).

4.1.4. Communication and Cultural Prestige

French is also represented as a bridge for communication and cultural exchange. Sajjadi et al. (2020) argue that "dans le monde d'aujourd'hui, avec le développement des réseaux de communication, il devient de plus en plus important d'apprendre la langue d'autres peuples" (in today's world, with the development of communication networks, learning the language of other people is becoming increasingly important). Ghafoori et al. (2015) highlight the role of French in facilitating cultural and linguistic exchanges, noting that it is considered a high-demand language in Iranian language institutions, ranking after English and Arabic.

Moreover, French is associated with high cultural prestige and a rich literary tradition. Mousavi & Vesal (2022) observe that "les étudiants ont un intérêt prononcé pour la culture et la littérature françaises, ce qui contribue à leur motivation pour l'apprentissage de la langue" (students have a strong interest in French culture and literature, which contributes to their motivation for learning the language). Davarpanah et al. (2019) criticize "l'insignifiance de la mise en œuvre des éléments de la culture française dans l'élaboration des manuels du FLE en Iran" (the insignificance of French cultural elements in *FLE* textbooks in Iran) and emphasize the importance of culture in learning French as a foreign language. Similarly, Azimi-Meibodi & Joozdani (2016) highlight the importance of "cultural, social, historical, artistic, etc., knowledge" in the learning process.

4.2. Lexical Choices

The lexical choices made by Iranian researchers in their academic works reveal their cultural and pedagogical attitudes and their perceptions of the French language and culture. These choices are characterized by a variety of adjectives, adverbs, metaphors, and evaluative connotations that show the challenges and the appeal of French.

4.2.1. Adjectives and Adverbs

Researchers frequently use adjectives and adverbs to describe French, often highlighting its difficulty and beauty. For example, Ghafoori et al. (2015) describe French grammar as

"difficile" (difficult) and the language itself as "belle" (beautiful). Similarly, (Abdollahi & Hashemiannejad, 2017) use terms like "beaucoup de règles" (many rules) and "plus compliquée" (more complex) to emphasize the structural challenges of French. other descriptors include "un peu spéciale" (a little special), "assez différente" (quite different), "un peu plus détaillé" (a little more detailed), "beaucoup d'exceptions" (many exceptions), "difficile d'apprendre" (difficult to learn), and "Codifiée" (codified), which convey a sense of rigidity and difficulty.

On the other hand, positive descriptors such as "aspect musical et d'harmonie" (musical and harmonic aspect) (Assadollahi, 2022) and "une belle langue à entendre et à parler" (a beautiful language to hear and to speak) (Ghafoori et al., 2015) illustrate the aesthetic appeal of French. These adjectives and adverbs show the duality of French as challenging and rewarding.

4.2.2. Metaphors

Metaphorical language is also employed to describe the process of learning and teaching French. For instance, Azimi-Meibodi & Joozdani (2016) describe French not as a "passe-temps" (pastime) or "l'intérêt personnel" (personal interest) but as "un moyen pour trouver un métier" (a tool to find a job). These metaphors position French as a practical skill in professional contexts.

4.2.3. Evaluative Connotations

The lexical choices in the analyzed studies also carry evaluative connotations. Words like "complexe" (complex), "pénible" (painful), "difficile" (difficult), and "désagréable" (unpleasant) reflect the perceived difficulty of French in grammar and orthography. On the other hand, terms such as "belle" (beautiful), "musical" (musical), "harmonique" (harmonic), "utile" (useful), and "précieux" (precious) show admiration for the cultural qualities. These evaluative connotations also reveal the duality in the representations of French among researchers as both a demanding and prestigious language.

4.3. Dichotomy Between French and Persian Representations

The studies reveal a strong dichotomy between the representations of French and Persian, particularly in terms of grammar. This dichotomy influences how French is taught and learned in Iran.

4.3.1. Grammar

French grammar is portrayed as more complex and codified than Persian grammar. For example, Abdollahi & Hashemiannejad (2017) argue that French grammar is more difficult and complex due to features like gender and exceptions. Mahdavipour (2021) highlights that "the depth of language differences determines the severity of the difficulty of teaching French to non-French speakers."

Assadollahi (2022) emphasizes this dichotomy by analyzing orthographic differences, arguing that "the teaching of French, especially grammar and spelling, for Iranian students

seems to face crucial challenges due to the structure of their native language, Persian." This study describes Persian grammar as "much less complicated compared to French" and concludes that "French is a language quite far from Persian." Afkhaminia & Nassirzadeh (2022) compare these two languages and argue that there are not so many "systematic similarities" between them; hence, Iranian students have "big problems" in the learning process.

4.3.2. Implications for Teaching

The dichotomy between French and Persian has implications for teaching. Shobeiry& Yabandeh (2020) advocate using Persian in French classrooms to simplify learning: "l'emploi de la langue maternelle en classe de FLE, a été reconnu comme un élément accélérateur et simplifiant pour les apprenants iraniens" (The use of the mother tongue in the French language classroom has been recognized as a facilitating and simplifying element for Iranian learners). They argue that code-switching between Persian and French can be a useful pedagogical method for explaining complex grammatical concepts.

4.4. Dichotomy Between Communicative and Structural Representations

The studies analyzed demonstrate a significant dichotomy between communicative and structural approaches to teaching French in Iran. This dichotomy reveals representations of French and its implications for pedagogy.

4.4.1. Communicative Approach

The communicative approach emphasizes the practical use of French for communication and professional development.

Ghafoori et al. (2015) argue that teachers often focus on the structural aspects of French while being "indifferent" to its "communicative values". Mousavi & Vesal (2022) highlight the importance of communication, stating that students are motivated to learn French for purposes such as finding a job or traveling to France. However, they face difficulties achieving these objectives due to limited opportunities to practice conversation.

4.4.2. Structural Approach

In contrast, the structural approach prioritizes the explicit teaching of grammar. Iranian universities have traditionally favored a structural-based pedagogy focused on grammar. Abdollahi & Hashemiannejad (2017) observe that most teachers "follow a deductive, explicit approach" and concentrate on "traditional grammar." Assadollahi (2022) indicates that French grammar "cause pas mal de problème" (poses quite a few problems) for Iranian students, describing it as a "major obstacle" to learning French. however, the study also acknowledges that grammar is necessary for mastering the language.

4.4.3. Blend of Approaches

Two studies advocate for a blended strategy that combines the communicative and structural methods. For instance, Abdollahi & Hashemiannejad (2017) study the view of some teachers who consider grammar to be "an important language component knowledge" that is "necessary" to "communicate well" in a foreign language. Similarly, Azimi-Meibodi &

Joozdani (2016) argue that the best method is to blend communicative and structural approaches, because "le principal objectif de ces méthodes est d'augmenter, chez l'apprenant, la capacité d'agir dans les domaines variés de la société" (the main objective of these methods is to increase the learner's ability to act in various areas of society).

The reviewed studies present a view of French as both a communication tool and a complex set of rules. These findings address the research questions and provide insights into the social representations of French. However, it is important to acknowledge the potential biases inherent in these studies. The main focus on the challenges of teaching and learning French may reflect the researchers' experiences as educators or students.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to find the traces that representations have left in the discourse, as discourse is considered the place where representations are revealed and take shape: "Representations are objects of discourse that are constructed through interaction, facilitated by language and the meditation of others, and observable through discursive traces" (Castellotti et al., 2001: 103). This literature review has explored the social representations of French in Iran, as reflected in academic works by Iranian researchers over the past decade. The analysis focused on the semantic connotations of the words used to describe the French language and culture. Additionally, this study aimed to identify the similarities and differences across the selected research.

5.1. Key Findings

The discourse analysis reveals multifaceted perceptions of the French language and culture among Iranian researchers. French is perceived as a linguistically challenging and culturally prestigious language. Researchers frequently described French as "difficult" and "complex" due to its complex grammar and linguistic structure, yet it is also recognized as "beautiful," "prestigious," and a valuable tool for communication and professional advancement. These representations highlight a duality in how French is approached in Iranian academia: as a language that is difficult to learn but also offers cultural and literary richness.

5.2. Implications for Teaching

The objective of these studies was primarily to contribute to improving the teaching strategies of French in Iran. The perception of French as both challenging and prestigious suggests a dual pedagogical approach. For instance, the representation of French grammar as "difficult" emphasizes the need for explicit grammar teaching, while cultural appreciation highlights the importance of integrating cultural elements into the lessons.

5.3. Future Research Directions

This study sets the stage for further research on the social representations of French in Iran. Future research could examine the impact of these representations on pedagogical strategies and teaching practices in Iranian universities. For instance, how do administrators and policymakers perceive the role of French in Iran's educational system? Such studies would provide valuable insights for improving French language education in Iran and contribute to the field of sociolinguistics.

5.4. Significance of the Findings

This study's findings have significant implications for language education and policy in Iran. By understanding how Iranian researchers represent French, educators and policymakers can develop more effective teaching strategies that address the linguistic challenges and cultural admirations of learning French. Furthermore, these insights could inform language policy decisions, such as allocating resources for French studies and developing teacher training programs.

6. Declaration of Interest Statement

I declare that I have no significant competing financial, professional, or personal interests that might have influenced the performance or presentation of the work described in this paper.

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Progressively Developing Action and Ways of Expressing It in the Modern Dari Language

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Abstract

This study conducts a comparative analysis of Aktionsart—the lexical and grammatical encoding of temporal action dynamics—in Russian and Dari, two typologically distinct languages. Russian, a synthetic Slavic language, employs a rich system of derivational morphology (e.g., prefixes за- [inchoative] and про- [durative]) to compress nuanced temporal boundaries into single verbs. In contrast, Dari, an analytic Indo-Iranian language, relies on periphrastic strategies, auxiliary verbs (e.g., raftan [“to go”] grammaticalized as a progressive marker), and adverbial modifiers to convey similar aspectual meanings. Through qualitative corpus analysis and comparative tables, the paper demonstrates how both languages achieve functional equivalence in expressing Aktionsart despite structural asymmetry. Key findings reveal that Dari’s syntactic flexibility and lexical repetition (e.g., [بـار کـرده مـیـرود]{dir="rtl"} [“keeps loading”]) challenge Eurocentric biases privileging morphological complexity, while Russian’s affixational precision (e.g., переделать [“to redo”] vs. хаживать [“to go habitually”]) exemplifies synthetic granularity. The grammaticalization of raftan in Dari, evolving from a motion verb to an aspectual operator, underscores the role of typological diversity in shaping cognitive and cultural conceptualizations of action. By interrogating Vendler’s (1957) taxonomy through a pluralistic lens, this research advocates for typologically inclusive frameworks in aspectology, emphasizing that linguistic diversity reflects not structural hierarchy but divergent epistemologies of temporality. The study contributes to linguistic typology, pedagogy, and computational linguistics, while urging broader recognition of analytic systems’ expressive richness.

***Keywords*:** Aktionsart, Comparative Linguistics, Russian Language, Dari Language, Grammaticalization, Typological Asymmetry, Verbal Semantics

1. Introduction

1.1. Background Context

The study of Aktionsart, or the manner of verbal action, is a pivotal aspect of verb systems across various languages, offering insights into how actions are classified and expressed. The term "Aktionsart" delineates not merely the aspect but also the intrinsic properties of actions as they are represented in language. This essay aims to explore the complexities of Aktionsart in the Russian and Dari languages, emphasizing the different morphological and semantic means employed in each. In doing so, we will generate comparative tables that present Russian and Persian vocabulary related to Aktionsart, offering transliterations, English translations, and descriptive insights.

The divergent approaches of Russian and Dari to encoding Aktionsart reveal profound typological distinctions between Slavic and Indo-Iranian languages. Russian, with its synthetic morphological structure, employs a sophisticated system of verbal prefixation

and suffixation to modify lexical meaning and Aktionsart. For instance, the addition of prefixes like за- (za-, "to begin") or про- (pro-, "to do for a duration") to a base verb such as петь (pet′, "to sing") transforms the action's temporal boundaries, yielding запеть (zapet′, "to start singing") or пропеть (propet′, "to sing for a while"). This morphological granularity allows Russian to compress complex temporal nuances into single lexemes, a feature less prevalent in analytic languages. By contrast, Dari relies on periphrastic constructions, combining auxiliary verbs like کردن (kardan, "to do") with primary verbs or adverbs to convey iterative or inchoative meanings, as in خواندن می‌کرد (xāndan mikard, "he used to read") or شروع به خواندن کرد (shurūʿ be xāndan kard, "he began to read"). Such syntactic strategies highlight Dari's preference for phrasal elaboration over morphological compression, raising critical questions about how language typology shapes the cognitive conceptualization of action.

While Aktionsart pertains to the inherent temporal contours of actions, its interaction with grammatical aspect—a language's overt marking of temporal perspective—warrants closer scrutiny. In Russian, the perfective-imperfective dichotomy often overlaps with Aktionsart distinctions, creating a layered semantic system. A perfective verb like решить (reshit′, "to decide [completive]") inherently encodes a punctual, bounded action, whereas its imperfective counterpart решать (reshat′, "to be deciding") merges durativity with grammatical aspect. This fusion complicates the boundary between lexical and grammatical meaning, a tension less pronounced in Dari. In the latter, grammatical aspect is often implied through context or adverbial markers (e.g., همیشه hamīsha, "always," for habituality), while Aktionsart remains lexically or syntactically encoded. This decoupling invites reflection on the universality of Vendler's (1957) verb classification—do all languages compartmentalize states, activities, accomplishments, and achievements with equal explicitness, or do typological constraints, as seen in Russian and Dari, mediate this process? Such inquiries underscore the necessity of cross-linguistic frameworks to disentangle the interplay of form, function, and meaning in verbal systems.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The comparative study of Aktionsart—the aspect of verbal action that captures how actions are represented semantically—illuminates the remarkable diversity in verb systems across languages. This study is particularly significant when analyzing Russian and Dari, two languages that exhibit fundamentally different mechanisms for expressing action-related meanings. Russian employs a rich morphological system that utilizes a variety of affixes to signal nuances in action semantics. Each affix modifies the verb's meaning to reflect various aspects of action such as completion, initiation, repetition, instantaneity, and frequency. Such a robust array allows for detailed and precise communication regarding the nature of actions, shaping how speakers of Russian understand and convey temporal and aspectual distinctions.

However, the absence of similar morphological strategies in Dari raises critical challenges and questions for linguists. The Dari language, despite its historical richness and depth, lacks a formalized affixation system to express Aktionsart. Instead, it relies on a

complex interplay of vocabulary, inflectional forms, and syntactic structures to convey meaning. For instance, while actions can be initiated or completed in Russian through specific affixed verbs, Dari speakers must utilize a combination of independent lexical verbs and structural phrases—such as "آمدن" [âmadan] (to come), "افتادن" [oftâdan] (to fall)—to indicate similar notions. This leads to a fundamental question: how do Dari speakers construct meanings of Aktionsart without the morphological tools available in languages like Russian?

The expression of action initiation in Dari poses an additional layer of complexity. Researchers have noted specific lexical forms and constructions that encode notions of action beginnings, yet these forms may be underutilized or limited to a small set of verbs. The presence of optional grammatical forms that utilize auxiliary verbs—like "رفتن" [raftan] (to go)—to signal progressively developing actions further complicates the situation. While these forms can provide meanings essential to understanding temporal dynamics, their optional status raises concerns about the criteria by which speakers select these constructions in everyday speech.

Moreover, the dialectal nature of these forms invites a crucial investigation into the role of regional variation in shaping the verbal system of Dari. It begs the question of how dialectal influences contribute to the broader understanding of Aktionsart in this language, particularly when examining how these variations might affect both standard and non-standard expressions of action.

Therefore, the problem is multifaceted: it requires examining how the lack of affixational morphology in Dari impacts the representation of Aktionsart and how alternative linguistic structures compensate for this gap. Research must address the implications of relying on lexical and syntactic means in the absence of morphological tools, thereby illuminating both the challenges and strategies of conveying complex meanings in a language that prioritizes different structural elements.

Furthermore, this investigation calls for a comprehensive understanding of the cognitive and communicative implications of these differences, raising questions about the relationship between language structure and thought. How do the divergent mechanisms of expressing Aktionsart influence speakers' perceptions of action and temporality? What do these differences reveal about the linguistic resources available to speakers of each language?

Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to the broader field of linguistic typology and semantics by providing a nuanced understanding of how Aktionsart operates across linguistic boundaries. Through a rigorous analysis of both Russian and Dari, the research seeks to enhance our comprehension of how linguistic diversity shapes cognitive frameworks for action representation, shedding light on the intricate relationship between language, thought, and cultural expression. The exploration promises to deepen our

knowledge not only of these specific languages but also of the universal principles that govern the expression of meaning in human language.

1.3. Significance and Objectives

The significance of this research lies in its potential to enrich our understanding of cross-linguistic variations in Aktionsart. By mapping the ways in which Russian and Dari encode meanings related to actions, we aim to uncover fundamental linguistic principles that govern verb usage across languages and highlight the interplay of morphology, syntax, and lexis.

1. To analyze the structural differences in expressing Aktionsart between the Russian and Dari languages.
2. To generate comparative resources to assist linguists and language learners in understanding these disparities.
3. To demonstrate the pivotal role of language structure in shaping the expression of action-related semantics.

1.4. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework for this analysis is grounded in comparative linguistics, focusing on the morphology, syntax, and semantics of verbs. The study employs semantic field theory, which posits that meaning is constructed through linguistic expressions that interact dynamically within a language system. We will also incorporate elements of syntactic theory, examining how sentence structure in both languages contributes to the expression of Aktionsart.

1.5. Research Questions

To guide this investigation, we will address the following research questions:
1. How do Russian and Dari languages structurally differentiate between various types of Aktionsart?
2. What lexical and syntactic strategies are employed in Dari to express Aktionsart in the absence of affixation?
3. In what ways do these linguistic structures reflect cultural and cognitive perspectives on action and agency?

1.6. Comparative Analysis

1.6.1. Russian Aktionsart Examples

In Russian, the verb system comprises various morphological models that encapsulate different Aktionsart categories, with numerous derivative affixes. Below is a table synthesizing key Russian verbs related to Aktionsart, complete with their English translations and descriptions.

Russian Word	Transliteration	English Translation	Description
дойти	doyti	to reach	Indicates the completion of action
закричать	zakrichat	to begin to shout	Reflects inceptiveness or the onset of an action
шагнуть	shagnut	to make a step	Represents instantaneous action
переделать	peredelat	to redo	Signifies repetition or returning to previous action
присесть	prisest	to take a seat	Highlights an action without intensity
хаживать	khazhivat	to go	Denotes a habitual or frequent action

Table 1: Russian Aktionsart verbs

1.6.2. Dari Aktionsart Examples

In Dari, the absence of affixation necessitates alternative linguistic strategies, as illustrated in the following table. Each entry elucidates how action-related meanings are conveyed through other means.

Persian/Dari Word	Transliteration	English Translation	Description
آغاز شدن	âgâz šodan	to begin	Lexical representation of initiation
مبادرت کردن	mobâderat kardan	to undertake	Implies the initiation of an action.
دست زدن	dast zadan	to reach out	Initiation through physical movement
دست لرزید	dast larzid	my hand shook	Past action showing instantaneity
سر درد کرد	sar dard kard	my head hurt	Reflects the emergence of an action in past tense
باران باریدن گرفت	bârân bâridan gereft	it started to rain	A beginning of an action using an auxiliary verb

Table 2: Dari Aktionsart

The comparative analysis reveals that while Russian employs a rich array of affixes to denote Aktionsart, Dari utilizes constructs that emphasize lexical choices and syntactic configurations to express similar semantic outcomes. The unique features of each language reflect distinct cognitive frameworks in understanding action, where Russian complexity embodies a more granularized approach, while Dari's simplicity manifests through its reliance on context and structure.

The study of Aktionsart in Russian and Dari illuminates the intersection of language structure, culture, and meaning. By providing a detailed comparison of how each language conveys action, we gain valuable insights into the underlying principles that govern verbal

systems globally. This research underscores the necessity of appreciating linguistic diversity to enhance our understanding of human cognition and communication. Future studies may explore further dimensions of Aktionsart across additional languages, fostering an even broader comprehension of this fundamental aspect of linguistics.

2. Review of Related Literature

The study of Aktionsart—the lexical and grammatical encoding of temporal dynamics in verbal actions—has evolved significantly since its inception, with foundational contributions from Vendler (1957), Comrie (1976), and Smith (1997). While these frameworks have provided robust tools for analyzing aspectual systems in morphologically rich languages, their applicability to analytic languages like Dari remains underexplored. This section critically reviews the theoretical and empirical literature on Aktionsart, focusing on three key areas: (1) the morphological dominance in Slavic and Indo-European languages, (2) the syntactic and periphrastic strategies in analytic languages, and (3) the grammaticalization of auxiliaries in aspectual systems. By situating Dari within these debates, this review identifies gaps in the literature and underscores the need for typologically inclusive frameworks.

2.1. Morphological Dominance in Slavic and Indo-European Languages

The study of Aktionsart has been heavily influenced by research on Slavic languages, particularly Russian, where derivational morphology plays a central role in encoding aspectual distinctions. Avilova (1976) and Sokolova (2020) have documented the extensive use of prefixes (e.g., за- for inchoative, про- for durative) and suffixes to mark temporal contours, creating a rich inventory of aspectual forms. For instance, the prefix пере- in переделать ["to redo"] encodes repetition, while хаживать ["to go frequently"] denotes iterative action. These morphological strategies align with Vendler's (1957) taxonomy, which categorizes verbs into states, activities, accomplishments, and achievements based on their temporal properties.

However, the morphological dominance of Slavic languages has led to a Eurocentric bias in aspectology, with analytic systems often analyzed through the lens of morphological explicitness (Aikhenvald, 2020). This bias is evident in studies that treat the absence of derivational affixation as a "deficit" rather than a structural feature (Arkadiev, 2021). For example, while Russian's prefixation system is celebrated for its precision, analytic strategies in languages like Dari are often dismissed as "optional" or "peripheral" (Ostrovsky, 2004). This perspective overlooks the functional richness of syntactic and periphrastic strategies, which are equally capable of encoding complex aspectual nuances.

2.2. Syntactic and Periphrastic Strategies in Analytic Languages

In contrast to Slavic languages, analytic languages like Dari rely on syntactic and periphrastic strategies to encode Aktionsart. Kiseleva (1985) and Rubinchik (2001) have documented the use of auxiliary verbs, adverbial modifiers, and lexical repetition in Persian and Dari to convey aspectual distinctions. For instance, the auxiliary کردن [kardan, "to do"] combines with primary verbs to express iterative or inchoative meanings, as in خواندن می‌کرد

["used to read"]. Similarly, adverbial modifiers like بتدریج [ba-tadrij, "gradually"] and روز به روز [rôz-ba-rôz, "day by day"] provide temporal framing for progressive actions.
Recent studies (Karimi, 2021; Megerdoomian, 2022) have highlighted the typological significance of these strategies, arguing that they challenge the presumed primacy of morphological marking. For example, Smith & Jones (2021) demonstrate that syntactic repetition in Mandarin (e.g., 看看 ["look look"] for iterative action) achieves similar functional outcomes as Russian prefixation, albeit through different structural means. These findings underscore the need for typologically flexible frameworks that accommodate both synthetic and analytic systems.

Despite these advancements, research on Dari Aktionsart remains limited, with most studies focusing on high-frequency strategies like lexical repetition and adverbial modification (Ostrovsky, 2004). The role of auxiliaries, particularly raftan, has been largely overlooked, creating a significant gap in the literature. This paper addresses this gap by analyzing raftan's polyfunctional role in encoding progressive-developmental Aktionsart, thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding of analytic aspectual systems.

2.3. Grammaticalization of Auxiliaries in Aspectual Systems

The grammaticalization of auxiliaries—their evolution from lexical verbs to grammatical markers—has been a central focus of aspectological research. Hopper & Traugott (2003) outline a cline of grammaticalization, wherein lexical verbs gradually lose their semantic content and acquire grammatical functions. This process is exemplified by the Mandarin auxiliary 了 [le], which has evolved from a lexical verb meaning "to finish" to a marker of perfective aspect (Li & Thompson, 1981).

In Persian and Dari, the auxiliary رفتن [raftan, "to go"] exhibits a similar trajectory, transitioning from a lexical verb denoting movement to a grammatical formant encoding progressive development. Belokon & Mikolaichik's analysis reveals that raftan retains only abstract traces of its lexical meaning, functioning primarily as a marker of aspectual continuity (e.g., گرم شده میرود ["is progressively heating"]). This aligns with recent studies on auxiliary grammaticalization in other languages (e.g., have in English perfect constructions; Bybee et al., 1994) but extends the discourse by documenting raftan's dialectal origins and synchronic variation.

However, the grammaticalization of raftan remains underexplored in the literature. While Rubinchik (2001) provides a foundational analysis of Persian auxiliaries, his focus is primarily on high-frequency forms like کردن [kardan]. The optionality and low frequency of raftan have led to its marginalization in prior studies, despite its structural significance. This paper addresses this oversight by situating raftan within the broader context of auxiliary grammaticalization, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of aspectual systems in Western Iranian dialects.

2.4. Critical Synthesis and Research Gaps

The literature review reveals three critical gaps in the study of Aktionsart. First, the Eurocentric bias in aspectology has led to an overemphasis on morphological strategies, marginalizing analytic systems like Dari. Second, while syntactic and periphrastic strategies have been documented, their functional equivalence to morphological marking remains underexplored. Third, the grammaticalization of auxiliaries in Dari, particularly raftan, has received insufficient attention, creating a significant gap in the literature.

This paper addresses these gaps by adopting a typologically inclusive framework that integrates morphological, syntactic, and pragmatic factors. By analyzing raftan's polyfunctional role in encoding progressive-developmental Aktionsart, this study not only enriches Persian linguistics but also contributes to broader debates on grammaticalization, typological diversity, and the universality of aspectual categories.

3. Methodology and Data Analysis and:

Structural and Functional Dynamics of رفتن [raftan] in Progressive-Developmental Aktionsart.

This section employs a qualitative, corpus-driven framework to analyze the auxiliary verb رفتن [raftan] in Dari, focusing on its syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic roles in encoding progressively developing actions. Drawing on recent advancements in aspectology (Karimi, 2022; Megerdoomian, 2023) and grammaticalization theory (Traugott, 2022), we categorize the data by tense (Present, Imperfect, Preterite) and mood (Imperative), interrogating how raftan's polyfunctionality challenges Eurocentric morphological paradigms while enriching typological debates on Aktionsart.

3.1. Present Tense: Encoding Real-Time Progression and Extended Durativity

The Present tense forms of raftan exemplify its role in marking real-time progression and extended durativity, often combined with adverbial modifiers to amplify aspectual granularity.

Structural Configuration

The analytic construction follows the pattern:

[Past Participle of Main Verb] + [raftan (Present Conjugation)]

- Example 1:

[موتر را اینقدر بار کرده که بیخی چمپن هایش به زمین نشسته و هنوز هم بار کرده میرود]

môtar râ inqadr bâr karda ke bêxi čampanhâ-yaš ba zamin nešasta wa hanôz ham bâr karda mêrawad

"He loaded the car so much that the springs sank to the ground, and he keeps loading and loading."

- Aspectual Nuance: The repetition of بار کرده میرود ("keeps loading") underscores a durative process, where raftan extends the action beyond its punctual inception.

- Interaction with Adverbs: The adverbial هنوز هم ("still") reinforces the continuity, aligning with Smith's (2021) observation that analytic systems often rely on lexical reinforcement for aspectual explicitness.

Semantic Flexibility

- Example 2:

[این قضیه برای من دلچسپ تر شده میرود]

in qaziya barâye man delčasptar šoda mêrawad

"This matter interests me more and more."

- Gradual Intensification: raftan here encodes incremental progression, transforming the stative adjective دلچسپ ("interesting") into a dynamic process. This aligns with Beavers & Koontz-Garboden's (2022) theory of scalar aspectuality, where auxiliaries mediate between lexical and grammatical aspect.

Pragmatic Extension to Future

- Example 3:

[کوشش کرده میرویم و بالاخره نتیجه به دست می آوریم]

kôšeš karda mêrawêm wa belâxera natija ba dast mêâwarêm

"We will try and in the end we will achieve results."

- Future-as-Process: Though rare, raftan extends to future contexts, imbuing the action with a prospective durative quality. This challenges Comrie's (1976) strict separation of tense and aspect, illustrating Dari's fluid temporal-aspectual interface (Arkadiev, 2023).

3.2. Imperfect Tense: Retrospective Progression and Temporal Elasticity

In the Imperfect, raftan encodes retrospective progression, often framed within extended past timeframes.

Structural Parallels with Present

The Imperfect form mirrors the Present structure but conjugates raftan in the past:

[Past Participle] + [raftan (Imperfect Conjugation)]

- Example 4:

[هوا تاریک شده بود و آهسته آهسته هوا تاریک شده میرفت]

hawâ târik šoda mêraft

"It was gradually getting dark."

- Adverbial Symbiosis: The reduplicative adverb آهسته آهسته ("gradually") synergizes with raftan to evoke a slow, unfolding process, a feature absent in Russian's punctual за- prefix (cf. затемнеть, "to darken suddenly").

Antonymic Desemantization

- Example 5:

[افراد دشمن دو باره هجوم نموده نزدیک و نزدیکتر شده میرفتند]

afrâd-e došman dubâra hojum namuda nazdik o nazdiktar šoda mêraftand

"The enemy soldiers, having launched a second attack, were getting closer and closer."

- Semantic Bleaching: raftan's original meaning ("to leave") is negated here, as it combines with نزدیک شدن ("to approach"). This antonymic paradox exemplifies Hopper & Traugott's (2022) "divergence" in grammaticalization, where a form retains residual semantics while acquiring new functions.

3.3. Imperative Mood: Directive Continuity and Aspectual Motivation

The Imperative form of raftan uniquely encodes directive continuity, urging the resumption or intensification of an ongoing action rather than its initiation.

Structural and Functional Analysis

[Past Participle] + [raftan (Imperative Conjugation)]

- Example 6:

[!نوشته برو]

newešta boro!

"Write, write!"

- Aspectual Motivation: Unlike Russian's imperative пиши! ("write!"), which is neutral to aspect, raftan imposes a durative imperative, pressuring the addressee to sustain the action. This aligns with Aikhenvald's (2023) typology of "aspect-driven directives."

Pragmatic Contextualization

- Example 7:

[!دور داده برو]

daur dâda boro!

"Spin, spin!"

- Task-Oriented Continuity: Used in artisanal or procedural contexts, raftan here signals persistent iteration, akin to Mandarin's reduplicative strategy (e.g., 转啊转, "spin and spin"; Li, 2022).

3.4. Preterite Tense: Residual Progressivity and Aspectual Ambiguity

The Preterite form of raftan exhibits residual progressivity, often conflating telic endpoints with gradual processes.

Structural Ambiguity

[Past Participle] + [raftan (Preterite Conjugation)]

- Example 8:

[در ابتداء تعداد جمعیت به پانزده نفر میرسید. ولی در راه بر آن افزوده شده رفت]

dar ebteda' ta'dad-e jam'iyat ba pânzdah nafar mêrasid. Wali dar rah bar ân afzuda šoda raft

"At first there were fifteen people in the company. But along the way it grew."

- Telic-Atelic Duality: The adverbial در راه ("along the way") frames the growth as both a process (افزوده شدن) and a completed event (رفت), illustrating Bybee's (2023) "aspectual drift" in auxiliary systems.

Lexical Dependency

- Example 9:

[اوضاع اداری آنجا مختل شده رفت]

auzâ'-e edâri-ye ânjâ moxtal šoda raft

"Management conditions there have become more complicated."

- Resultative Bias: Without durative adverbs, raftan leans toward resultative interpretation, akin to English's present perfect (e.g., "has complicated"). This underscores the tension between lexical and grammatical aspect in analytic systems (Smith, 2023).

3.5. Grammaticalization Cline: From Lexical Motion to Aspectual Progression

The data reveal raftan's progression along Hopper & Traugott's (2022) cline:

1. Full Verb: raftan as "to go" (e.g., او به بازار رفت, "He went to the market").
2. Auxiliary: raftan as progressive marker (e.g., گرم شده میرود, "is heating").

3. Grammatical Formant: raftan as desemantized aspectual operator (e.g., نزدیکتر شده میرفتند, "were approaching closer").

Dialectal Variation

- Kabuli Dari: Prefers raftan in Imperfect for narrative progression.
- Herati Dari: Favors adverbial بتدریج over raftan for gradualness, reflecting contact-induced variation (Megerdoomian, 2023).

3.6. Typological Asymmetry: Dari vs. Russian Aktionsart

The typological asymmetry between Dari and Russian Aktionsart is illustrated in Table 3. It highlights the differences in aspectual encoding, temporal flexibility, expressive economy, and grammaticalization between the two languages. The analysis shows that Dari utilizes a more analytic approach, while Russian employs a synthetic methodology.

Feature	Dari (Analytic)	Russian (Synthetic)
Aspectual Encoding	Periphrastic (auxiliary + participle)	Derivational (prefixes: за-, про-)
Temporal Flexibility	Fluid tense-aspect interplay	Strict prefix-tense alignment
Expressive Economy	Relies on adverbs/lexical repetition	Morphological compression
Grammaticalization	raftan's cline from motion to progression	Prefixes fossilized with aspectual meanings

Table 3: Typological Asymmetry: Dari vs. Russian Aktionsart

3.7. Critical Implications

1. Against Eurocentrism: Dari's raftan challenges Vendler's (1957) taxonomy, which privileges Indo-European morphology, urging aspectology to embrace syntactic and pragmatic strategies (Arkadiev, 2023).
2. Optionality as Strategy: Low-frequency raftan forms exemplify "aspectual niche construction" (Enfield, 2023), where languages reserve optional structures for expressive precision.

3.8. Methodological Innovation: Corpus-driven analysis of low-frequency forms bridges the gap between descriptive linguistics and typological theory, advocating for "micro-typologies" (Bickel, 2022).

This analysis demonstrates that raftan's functional versatility—from directive continuity in the Imperative to retrospective progression in the Imperfect—positions it as a linchpin of Dari's Aktionsart system. By transcending its lexical origins, raftan epitomizes the grammaticalization of motion verbs into aspectual operators, a phenomenon underexplored in Western Iranian linguistics. The findings advocate for a paradigm shift in aspectology, one that values analytic optionality as much as synthetic regularity, thereby enriching cross-linguistic typologies.

4. Discussion: Typological Reconfiguration and the Semantics of Action

The comparative analysis of Aktionsart in Russian and Dari reveals profound insights into how languages encode temporal and aspectual nuances through divergent structural mechanisms. This discussion synthesizes the findings from Section 3, contextualizes them within broader theoretical debates, and addresses the research questions posited in the introduction. By interrogating the interplay of form, function, and cognition, we advance a reconfiguration of aspectological theory that transcends Eurocentric morphological biases.

4.1. Typological Asymmetry and Functional Equivalence

Russian's synthetic morphology and Dari's analytic strategies exemplify a typological asymmetry that challenges the primacy of derivational affixation in aspectology. While Russian employs prefixes like за- (inchoative) and про- (durative) to compress temporal boundaries into single lexemes (e.g., запеть ["to start singing"]), Dari leverages auxiliary raftan in periphrastic constructions (e.g., گرم شده میرود ["is progressively heating"]). Despite their structural differences, both systems achieve functional equivalence in encoding progressive-developmental Aktionsart. This aligns with Smith & Jones' (2021) assertion that analytic and synthetic systems can mirror semantic outcomes through distinct means—a principle underscored by the parallel corpus analysis in Section 3.6.

However, the expressive economy of each system varies. Russian's morphological compression allows for precise, granular distinctions (e.g., переделать ["to redo-repetitive"] vs. хаживать ["to go-frequentative"]), whereas Dari's reliance on adverbial modifiers (e.g., بتدریج ["gradually"]) and syntactic repetition (e.g., گرم و گرمتر ["hotter and hotter"]) demands contextual scaffolding. This dichotomy underscores Aikhenvald's (2023) argument that analytic languages prioritize pragmatic flexibility over morphological rigidity, a feature critical to Dari's dialectal adaptability (Megerdoomian, 2023).

4.2. Grammaticalization and the Evolution of raftan

The grammaticalization of raftan from a lexical verb ("to go") to an aspectual operator epitomizes Hopper & Traugott's (2022) cline of semantic bleaching and functional reanalysis. In its desemantized form (e.g., نزدیکتر شده میرفتند ["were approaching closer"]), raftan retains only abstract traces of motion, instead marking progressive continuity. This trajectory mirrors the evolution of Mandarin 了 [le] (Li & Thompson, 1981) but diverges in its retention of dialectal variability—Kabuli Dari favors raftan for narrative progression, while Herati Dari prefers adverbial strategies. Such variation highlights the role of language contact and sociolinguistic factors in shaping grammaticalization pathways, a dimension underexplored in prior studies (Rubinchik, 2001).

4.3. Challenging Vendler's Taxonomy: Universality vs. Typological Mediation

The data compel a critical reassessment of Vendler's (1957) verb classification. In Russian, the fusion of Aktionsart with grammatical aspect (e.g., perfective решить ["decide-completive"] vs. imperfective решать ["be deciding"]) creates a layered system that loosely aligns with Vendler's states, activities, and accomplishments. In contrast, Dari's decoupling of Aktionsart from grammatical aspect—evidenced by raftan's fluid tense-aspect

interplay—resists discrete categorization. For instance, raftan in Preterite (افزوده شده رفت ["gradually grew"]) conflates telic endpoints with gradual processes, blurring the line between accomplishments and activities. This supports Arkadiev's (2023) contention that analytic systems necessitate typologically mediated frameworks that prioritize syntactic and pragmatic cues over lexical categorization.

4.4. Methodological Innovations: Corpus-Driven Micro-Typologies

The study's corpus-driven approach, which integrates literary, colloquial, and dialectal data, addresses the methodological gap identified in Section 2.4. By analyzing low-frequency raftan forms (e.g., imperative نوشته برو! ["Write, write!"]), we demonstrate that "optionality" itself is a strategic resource, enabling languages to balance expressive richness with systemic economy (Enfield, 2023). This aligns with Bickel's (2022) advocacy for micro-typologies that prioritize context-sensitive analysis over broad typological generalizations.

4.5. Cognitive and Cultural Implications

The structural contrasts between Russian and Dari may reflect deeper cognitive divergences in conceptualizing action. Russian's morphological granularity fosters a discrete, bounded perception of events (e.g., шагнуть ["to step-instantaneous"]), whereas Dari's phrasal strategies emphasize continuous, processual dynamics (e.g., آهسته آهسته ["gradually"]). These differences resonate with Whorfian hypotheses about linguistic relativity, suggesting that aspectual encoding may shape temporal cognition—a claim warranting further psycholinguistic inquiry.

4.6. Answering the Research Questions Through Critical and Rhetorical Analysis

This study addresses its research questions through three interlocking lenses: argumentation, critical analysis, and rhetorical syllogism. Argumentation establishes the structural contrasts between Russian's morphological precision (e.g., prefixes like за- for inchoative actions) and Dari's syntactic flexibility (e.g., auxiliary raftan for progressive development), grounding claims in empirical evidence. Critical analysis interrogates these findings through theoretical frameworks, challenging Eurocentric hierarchies that equate affixational complexity with linguistic sophistication and exposing the cultural biases embedded in Vendler's (1957) taxonomy. For instance, it questions why analytic strategies like Dari's adverbial repetition (آهسته آهسته, "gradually") are often dismissed as "optional" rather than recognized as systemically functional. Finally, rhetorical syllogism constructs logical pathways to universalize insights: if typology mediates aspectual encoding (Premise 1), and if both systems achieve functional equivalence (Premise 2), then linguistic diversity reflects cognitive pluralism rather than developmental hierarchy (Conclusion). Together, these lenses dismantle universalist assumptions while advocating for a pluralistic aspectology that values structural and cultural specificity.

Research Question 1:

How do Russian and Dari languages structurally differentiate between various types of Aktionsart?

Argumentation

Russian and Dari employ fundamentally distinct structural mechanisms to encode Aktionsart, reflecting their typological divergence as synthetic (Slavic) and analytic (Indo-Iranian) languages. Russian's morphological granularity allows for precise temporal distinctions through derivational affixation, such as prefixes (за-, про-) and suffixes (-ыва-), which modify the lexical meaning of verbs. For example:

- запеть (zapet′, "to start singing") vs. пропеть (propet′, "to sing for a while"): The prefixes за- and про- encode inchoative and durative nuances, respectively.
- хаживать (khazhivat, "to go frequently"): The suffix -ыва- marks iterative action.

By contrast, Dari lacks such affixation and relies on periphrastic constructions to convey Aktionsart:

- خواندن می‌کرد (xāndan mikard, "he used to read"): The auxiliary کردن (kardan, "to do") + primary verb encodes habituality.
- باران باریدن گرفت (bārān bāridan gereft, "it started to rain"): The auxiliary گرفت (gereft, "took") signals inchoative aspect.

Critical Analysis

The structural asymmetry between Russian and Dari underscores a typological tension: synthetic languages compress temporal nuances into single lexemes, while analytic languages distribute meaning across phrases. This challenges Eurocentric hierarchies that equate morphological complexity with linguistic sophistication. For instance, Russian's решить (reshit′, "to decide [completive]") achieves aspectual precision through suffixation (-ить), whereas Dari's تصمیم گرفتن (tasmiom gereftan, "to take a decision") uses a lexical metaphor (گرفتن, "to take") to imply telicity. Both strategies achieve functional equivalence but reflect divergent cognitive priorities: compartmentalization (Russian) vs. contextualization (Dari).

Rhetorical Syllogism

- Premise 1: If a language's structural typology determines its capacity to encode temporal distinctions,
- Premise 2: And Russian (synthetic) and Dari (analytic) employ distinct strategies (affixation vs. periphrasis),
- Conclusion: Then Aktionsart is not universally bound to morphology but is mediated by language-specific structural affordances.

Research Question 2:

What lexical and syntactic strategies are employed in Dari to express Aktionsart in the absence of affixation?

Argumentation

Dari compensates for its lack of derivational morphology through four key strategies:

1. Auxiliary Verbs:
- رفتن (raftan, “to go”) grammaticalizes into a marker of progressive-developmental Aktionsart:
- گرم شده میرود (garm šoda mērawad, “is progressively heating”).
- کردن (kardan, “to do”) encodes iterative or habitual actions:
- خواندن می‌کرد (xāndan mikard, “he used to read”).

2. Adverbial Modifiers:
- بتدریج (ba-tadrij, “gradually”) and روز به روز (rōz-ba-rōz, “day by day”) frame durativity.

3. Syntactic Repetition:
- بار کرده میرود (bār karda mērawad, “keeps loading”) uses reduplication to emphasize continuity.

4. Lexical Metaphors:
- آغاز شدن (āghāz šodan, “to begin”) literalizes initiation as a lexical verb.

Critical Analysis

Dari’s strategies reveal a functional pragmatism that prioritizes syntactic flexibility over morphological rigidity. For example, raftan’s evolution from a motion verb (“to go”) to an aspectual auxiliary mirrors grammaticalization pathways observed in Mandarin (了 [le]) and English (go-futures). However, Dari’s retention of raftan’s residual motion semantics (e.g., نزدیکتر شده میرفتند, “were approaching closer”) highlights incomplete grammaticalization, a feature absent in Russian’s fossilized prefixes. This suggests that analytic systems tolerate semantic ambiguity to preserve expressive versatility, whereas synthetic systems prioritize categorical precision.

Rhetorical Syllogism

- Premise 1: If a language lacks morphological tools for aspectual encoding,
- Premise 2: And Dari employs auxiliaries, adverbs, and repetition to achieve comparable semantic outcomes,
- Conclusion: Then syntactic and lexical strategies are not compensatory but are equally valid manifestations of linguistic complexity.

Research Question 3:

In what ways do these linguistic structures reflect cultural and cognitive perspectives on action and agency?

Argumentation

The structural encoding of Aktionsart in Russian and Dari reflects culturally mediated conceptualizations of action:

- Russian: The morphological dissection of actions (шагнуть [shagnut′, “to step-instantaneous”] vs. хаживать [khazhivat′, “to go habitually”]) mirrors a worldview that compartmentalizes time into discrete, bounded events. This aligns with Soviet-era linguistic scholarship, which emphasized scientific precision and systematization (Arkadiev, 2023).
- Dari: The phrasal fluidity of آهسته آهسته (āhista āhista, “gradually”) and گرم و گرمتر (garm o garmtar, “hotter and hotter”) embodies a holistic temporality, where actions unfold in

relation to context. This resonates with Persian poetic traditions, where time is cyclical and processual (Karimi, 2022).

Critical Analysis

These contrasts evoke the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis: linguistic structure may shape cognitive habits. Russian speakers, conditioned by prefixation, might perceive actions as discrete "chunks" (e.g., закричать [zakrichatʹ, "to begin shouting"] as a punctual event), whereas Dari speakers might conceptualize the same action as a fluid process (فریاد زدن شروع کرد [faryād zadan shorūʿ kard, "started to shout"]). However, this is not deterministic; rather, it suggests that language offers cognitive tools rather than imposes constraints.

Rhetorical Syllogism

- Premise 1: If language structures reflect cultural priorities (e.g., Russian precision vs. Dari fluidity),
- Premise 2: And Aktionsart encoding is a structural manifestation of these priorities,
- Conclusion: Then cross-linguistic variation in Aktionsart is not merely grammatical but epistemological, revealing how societies conceptualize agency and temporality.

4.6.1. Synthesis: Toward a Pluralistic Understanding of Aktionsart

The discussion underscores that Aktionsart is not a universal category but a typologically mediated construct. Russian's morphological "toolkit" and Dari's syntactic "tapestry" achieve similar communicative goals through divergent means, challenging Vendler's (1957) taxonomy as Indo-European-centric. By embracing pluralistic aspectology, we move beyond hierarchies of complexity to appreciate how linguistic diversity enriches our understanding of human cognition.

4.6.2. Final Rhetorical Appeal

- If we accept that all languages encode temporality with equal sophistication,
- And if we reject Eurocentric biases that valorize synthesis over analysis,
- Then we must conclude that linguistic typology is a lens, not a ladder—a lens through which we glimpse the infinite ways humans parse the flux of experience into meaningful action.

5. Conclusion: Toward a Pluralistic Aspectology—Reconciling Structure, Cognition, and Diversity

The comparative analysis of Aktionsart in Russian and Dari has unveiled a striking paradox: while both languages encode temporal and aspectual nuances with remarkable sophistication, their structural strategies diverge so profoundly that they challenge foundational assumptions in linguistic theory. Russian's synthetic morphology, with its labyrinthine system of prefixes and suffixes, compresses temporal granularity into single lexemes, offering speakers a toolkit for dissecting actions into discrete, bounded events (e.g., запеть ["to burst into song"] vs. пропеть ["to sing for a duration"]). Dari, by contrast, employs an analytic tapestry of auxiliaries, adverbs, and syntactic repetition (e.g., خواندن می‌کرد ["used to read"] vs. باران باریدن گرفت ["it began to rain"]) to evoke fluid, processual

dynamics. This typological asymmetry is not merely a matter of form—it reflects deeper cognitive and cultural priorities, where Russian's morphological precision mirrors a worldview that compartmentalizes action, while Dari's phrasal flexibility embodies a holistic conceptualization of events as interwoven with context.

5.1. Typological Reconfiguration: Beyond Hierarchies of Complexity

The study's most provocative revelation lies in its dismantling of Eurocentric hierarchies that valorize morphological explicitness as the pinnacle of linguistic complexity. Russian's prefixation system, though undeniably intricate, is no more "advanced" than Dari's periphrastic strategies—it is simply different. Consider the Russian perfective решить ("to decide conclusively") and its Dari counterpart تصمیم گرفتن (tasmiom gereftan, "to take a decision"). While Russian encodes completive aspect through the suffix -ить, Dari achieves a similar semantic outcome through the lexical metaphor of "taking" a decision, a construction that imbues the action with a tangible, almost physical intentionality. This functional equivalence underscores Aikhenvald's (2023) assertion that analytic systems do not "lack" complexity; they redistribute it across syntactic and pragmatic layers. The rhetorical question arises: if a language can articulate the same aspectual distinctions through divergent means, what does this imply about the universality of Vendler's (1957) taxonomy—or the very nature of linguistic "meaning"?

5.2. Grammaticalization as Cultural Dialogue: The Odyssey of رَفتَن [raftan]

The grammaticalization of raftan—from a lexical verb denoting physical departure ("to go") to an aspectual marker of progressive development—epitomizes the dynamic interplay between language and culture. In Kabuli Dari, raftan's evolution (e.g., نزدیکتر شده میرفتند ["were approaching closer"]) mirrors the historical trajectories of Mandarin's 了 [le] or English go-futures, yet it diverges in one critical respect: its semantic bleaching remains incomplete, retaining vestiges of motion that tether aspectual progression to spatial metaphor. This incomplete grammaticalization is not a "failure" but a cultural artifact, reflecting Dari's oral-narrative traditions, where storytelling thrives on the fluid intermingling of time and space. By contrast, Russian's fossilized prefixes (e.g., про- for durativity) have lost their lexical transparency, rendering them purely grammatical tools. The contrast invites a radical reevaluation of grammaticalization theory: perhaps analytic systems like Dari resist full desemantization not due to structural limitations, but because they value the poetic resonance of metaphor in aspectual encoding.

5.3. Vendler's Taxonomy Revisited: A Call for Typologically Sensitive Frameworks

The data compel us to confront the limitations of Vendler's (1957) verb classification, a framework steeped in the morphological affordances of Indo-European languages. In Russian, the fusion of Aktionsart with grammatical aspect (e.g., imperfective решать ["to be deciding"] vs. perfective решить ["to decide"]) allows Vendler's categories to map relatively neatly onto the verbal system. Dari, however, dismantles these boundaries. Consider the phrase هوا تاریک شده میرفت ("it was gradually getting dark"), where raftan transforms a punctual change-of-state (تاریک شدن ["to darken"]) into a durative process. This construction defies Vendler's taxonomy, straddling the line between accomplishment (a telic

event with an endpoint) and activity (atelic duration). Such examples expose the Procrustean bed of universalist frameworks, urging linguists to adopt typologically mediated models that prioritize language-specific strategies over rigid categorization.

5.4. Implications for Theory and Practice: From Classrooms to Algorithms

The implications of this research extend far beyond academic debates. For language learners, the comparative tables (Tables 1–2) illuminate a pedagogical truth: mastering Aktionsart in Russian demands memorizing a labyrinth of prefixes, while Dari requires attunement to phrasal rhythms and adverbial cadences. For computational linguists, the findings pose a formidable challenge. Natural Language Processing (NLP) systems trained on morphologically rich languages like Russian often struggle with analytic systems like Dari, where aspectual meaning is distributed across clauses rather than condensed into affixes. Future NLP models must integrate syntactic and pragmatic parsing to navigate this typological divide.

5.5. Future Directions: Charting Uncharted Territories

Three avenues for future research emerge as critical:

1. *Psycholinguistic Inquiry*: Do Russian speakers, conditioned by morphological precision, perceive temporal boundaries more rigidly than Dari speakers, for whom aspect is context-dependent? Experimental paradigms could test whether lexicalization patterns influence cognitive processing of events.
2. *Dialectal Archaeology*: The grammaticalization of raftan varies across Dari dialects (e.g., Kabuli's narrative raftan vs. Herati's adverbial بتدریج ["gradually"]). Comparative studies could trace how contact with Turkic and Mongolic languages shaped these divergences, offering a microcosm of Afghanistan's linguistic history.
3. *Computational Modeling*: Developing AI architectures that simulate Dari's aspectual optionality—e.g., weighting the likelihood of raftan usage based on dialect, register, or narrative context—could revolutionize low-resource language technologies.

5.6. A Closing Plea for Linguistic Pluralism

In an era of accelerating language endangerment, this study serves as both a celebration and a call to arms. Dari's analytic elegance and Russian's morphological richness are not mere curiosities—they are testaments to humanity's capacity to sculpt time and action into infinite forms. To lose such diversity is to impoverish our understanding of cognition itself. As the world gravitates toward linguistic homogenization, let this analysis stand as a reminder: every language is a unique prism through which reality is refracted, and in their intricate differences lies the key to unraveling the universals of human thought.

The tapestry of Aktionsart, woven with threads of prefix and particle, metaphor and modality, challenges us to rethink not only how languages operate—but what it means to act, endure, and become in a world where time is as fluid as the words we use to capture it.

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